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Meeting the Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities in Rural Alberta

by

Dana M. Laliberte

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies And Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Educational Administration

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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K. L. Ward (supervisor)

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Date: September 25, 1995

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of a delivery model for special education services to students with learning disabilities in North Peace Catholic School District #43. The intent was to determine how the needs of these students could best be met within a small, rural school system, particularly in the regular classroom.

The time period from September 1988 to June 1991 was studied. During that time, a newly initiated delivery model for special education services in the district was put in place under the leadership of the Supervisor of Special Services. The focus was on integrated services to all students with special needs, including those with learning disabilities.

Under the new initiative, it was intended that integration would become practice. Personnel supports were instituted and, in addition to the central office person, each school was allocated a portion of a school-based special education consultant and a general teacher assistant. All staff were actively involved in professional development activities that promoted the concept of integration and assisted them with meeting the needs of students in the regular classroom. Modifications were made to the program over the years.

The study examined practices in two Peace River schools, comparing the present delivery system to the past one. The superintendent, the principals, the school-based consultants, two teachers, two teacher assistants, two parents, and two community members were interviewed for their perceptions.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Organizational change is no longer an option in this ever-changing world. The organization that does not adapt and take a proactive stance to the changing needs of the educational environment is not prepared to handle the future. Crucial to the success of meeting and coping with new scenarios is the involvement of key stakeholders in the process. It has become more apparent that the consultative role of administrators is crucial to successful leadership. Little research has been done regarding personnel in the area of special education, particularly at the central office level. In the past, extensive research has taken place in the area of the principalship - principals as leaders, as change agents, as motivators, and so on. Recently, there has been a shift in focus to similar areas in relationship to the superintendent. Central office personnel working in the special education area usually act in a consulting capacity. The question needs to be asked - how can these educators serve as instructional leaders who assist school-level personnel in developing a "productive ethos" (Coleman and LaRocque, 1990, p. 189), particularly in relationship to creating nurturing environments for students with learning disabilities? As well, how does the special education team, those with expertise in the area of special education at central office and at the school level, work together and with other stakeholders to ensure this process occurs successfully?

The education of students with learning disabilities as a unique area has been a recognized field for some time. However, researchers are only beginning to investigate how these students can be integrated into regular classroom settings and how instruction can be modified so that such students can experience success in these settings.

Traditionally they have spent most of their school experience in regular classrooms, often enduring the stress and frustration of a system that finds it difficult to meet their needs. Because the population of students with learning disabilities has been somewhat negligible (7-10% of the population) in the past, these students have been pulled out of regular classrooms and given resource room instruction, usually of a minimal nature. The rest of the day was spent in regular classrooms. The present statistics on learning disabilities are much more alarming; it is estimated that anywhere from 10-20% of the population of a given classroom have learning disabilities of one kind or another (Slavin et al, 1991). This figure may be higher in some areas and in some schools. Since 1975, the identified population of learning disabled students has risen in excess of 250% (Slavin et al., 1991). As well, some researchers have begun to speculate about the possible correlations of growth rates between learning disabilities figures and illiteracy figures, learning disabilities figures and drop-out figures, and learning disabilities figures and criminality.

Whether or not these speculations are to be substantiated remains to be seen. The education system has always had to determine how to best meet the needs of learning disabled and other special needs populations. The need, however, now appears to be more crucial than ever. Perhaps, it is time to look at how their needs can be met, whether in the regular classroom or in pull-out situations. This may require a re-structuring of the traditional special education system used in districts.

The results of the study are intended to provide insights into the new roles regular classroom teachers have been given in schools with regards to meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in their classrooms. As well, the leadership roles of personnel in special education in facilitating the integration process, and education of

regular classroom teachers to enable them to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small, rural school district were investigated.

Background

In September 1988, North Peace Catholic School District #43 initiated an approach to special education that, at that time, was somewhat innovative in the province. It was felt that due to the significant increases in the numbers of special needs students, the school district was in a position to take a proactive stance in addressing the needs of an ever-changing student population. It began to develop educational innovations to meet its own specific situation; a loosely-structured program designed to reach the growing special education population in the schools. As well, the Learning Assistance Centre in Grande Prairie, which had previously handled a majority of the assessments, was closing down. It was felt that hiring a person who had the expertise in student testing to work out of central office, and initiating other cuts in expenditures, would be comparatively similar in cost to the existing system expenditure in special education.

In the first year, a Supervisor of Special Services was hired to work out of the central office to plan, develop, and implement the new program. This person had skills in special education and classroom and resource room experience in all four divisions. At the same time, resource room teachers were replaced by general teacher assistants in the schools and all students with special needs ranging from dependent handicapped students to learning disabled students were fully integrated into regular classrooms. Little or no training was done, particularly initially, with those teacher assistants and regular classroom teachers. The classroom teachers continued to work with the learning disabled students in much the same way as they had in the past when the students were in the classroom and not

attending resource room. Attempts were made to assist the teachers with programming and the development of individual education plans but time and distance prevented the supervisor from being able to meet the needs of all five schools in the district. The concentration was on assessments done by the Supervisor of Special Services. Previously, these services had been provided by the Learning Assistance Centre in Grande Prairie.

Over a three year period, many adjustments were made to the original format of the program. In the second year, it became apparent that more teacher expertise in the area of special education was needed at the school level. As a result, each school was assigned some portion of the time of a "school-based consultant" whose task it was to oversee the special education program in a particular school. The Supervisor of Special Services continued to act as a consultant to the schools and was responsible for the majority of assessments in the school district, and the general coordination of special education programs. However, now much of the daily organization and planning was delegated to the school-based consultants. The school-based consultants in Glenmary and Good Shepherd schools were qualified special education teachers with several years teaching experience in regular and special education classrooms.

The Supervisor of Special Services and the two school-based consultants became the special education team, and continued to coordinate the special education programs in the schools in an attempt to meet the needs of all students with special needs. However, one area that continued to present challenges was the area of students with learning disabilities. Teachers were asking - "How do I modify regular classroom programs for students with learning disabilities?" The special education team was often called upon to conduct in-service programmes and workshops in the area of modified programming for the regular classroom

teacher, teaching techniques and learning strategies to use with students who have learning disabilities, learning styles, and Barbara Vitale's right-brain approaches to instruction and learning. They were faced with the task of educating administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, students with learning disabilities, parents/guardians of learning disabled students, and school community members in this challenging area. In addition to this, it was apparent that the team would become a key facilitator in the process of integration.

A year after the program was initiated, the Brassard Committee (1989) produced the report entitled Claiming My Future. The authors argued that integration must allow all children the opportunity to show respect for one another by learning to value the unique individuality of each person. It argued against segregation because segregation suggests people who are different must be separated from the norm. The Brassard Report advocated for true integration but stated that integration would only happen when the education system led the way by being the first to promote this belief system. Upon the release of this report, the district felt that it was on the right track and that integration of all special needs students would become the focus of the future in education.

Modifications continued each year and one resource room program at Good Shepherd was partially reinstated. The school-based consultant positions expanded to 1/4 time. Progress continued and soon, the North Peace Catholic School District #43 earned a reputation of being innovative and progressive in the area of special education. Other districts began to approach the administration for information about the program. Many people requested presentations from the Supervisor of Special Services. Other schools and special education specialists began to visit the schools, particularly Good Shepherd School. It soon was evident that, at least in the north, the process of

integration was being considered by other school systems. Although there were still areas that needed attention, the system was operating with some success.

In the fourth year of the model, the Supervisor of Special Services left the system on an educational leave and was not replaced for that year. Schools were left to their own resources and the school-based consultants picked up the workload.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to look at one segment of that special population, the learning disabled students, and evaluate how their needs can best be met within a small, rural school system, and particularly in regular classrooms. Basic to the study was the necessity to look at the common value system that must be established among all stakeholders, as well as the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process. Recommendations are given at the end of the study that can serve as a guideline for use within the school district. These recommendations include programs and techniques that have been successful and are now well-accepted practices, as well as further suggestions that could be considered in the future. The purpose of the study was to find some tentative answers to the following question:

What role can Special Education personnel play in assisting teachers to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

A number of more specific questions served to guide the study. These questions are:

1. What are the characteristics and special needs of students with learning disabilities?

    a. What are teachers presently doing and what can they do in the future to identify and meet the needs of students with learning disabilities?

b. When students with learning disabilities are integrated into regular classrooms, what techniques do teachers use to engage them in active learning?

2. Whose role is it to support teachers in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities?

a. What is the role of the person assigned to that task?

b. Who should take leadership and /or participatory roles in the area of special education, particularly in areas of:

- programming and placement for students with learning disabilities?
- professional development for staff and parents?
- the promotion of belief systems, attitudes and values about students with learning disabilities?
- metacognitive teaching and learning processes

3. What are the obstacles to meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities?

4. Are there differences between the needs of elementary and junior/senior high school students with learning disabilities?

These questions provided a framework for the study but the study was in fact not limited to these particular questions. Other questions were added during the initial phases of data collection.

Definition of Terms

A number of terms were used throughout the study that describe educational concepts related to the area of learning disabilities.

Special education personnel - those teachers and teacher assistants, in the school and in central office, who work

directly and indirectly with students who have learning disabilities as well as other challenges.

Needs - those requirements perceived to be necessary and determined by the students, the parent(s) and/or teacher(s) as being instrumental to maximizing the student's learning potential. The academic needs may or may not be outlined in a modified individual education plan for the student.

Students - children who attend Glenmary and Good Shepherd schools in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in Peace River, ECS to grade 12.

Students with learning disabilities - those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving, and display general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas such as reading, writing, math, memory, organization, visual perception, auditory perception, spelling - and/or attention.

Metacognition - "awareness of oneself as an active agent in the process of knowing" (Mulcahy et al, 1985, p. 12).

Integration - is the practice of educating all students in the regular classroom in their neighborhood school.

Significance of the Study

Much research has been done in the area of implementation of innovative programs or practices. However, this particular special education system operates in isolation in Peace River, a small northern community, and has not been documented. Because of the nature of the program and its isolation, it lends itself to rethinking the question of modified programming in the regular classroom for children with learning disabilities, and the need for all stakeholders to continually re-evaluate and think meta-cognitively about the programs and teaching techniques used with this population. To do this, it may be necessary to become better critical thinkers and investigate other options for this population.

In addition to this, or perhaps supplemental to this idea, is the need to assess the contributions special education personnel can make in establishing a "productive ethos" (Coleman and LaRocque, 1990, p. 191) that will encourage this process. It became apparent that central office personnel need to work more closely with schools. One facet of the job description of personnel in leadership roles in special education might involve increased emphasis on educating all stakeholders: administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, students with learning disabilities, parents/guardians of learning disabled students and school community members about their special roles in these children's education. School systems need to nurture the necessary and compatible attitudes and belief systems that will contribute to this kind of ethos: a culture where all children and stakeholders are seen as valued, lifelong learners in the system, where teachers are teachers of all children and where all learners are valued for who they are. Culture-building or ethos-building, and the art of clarifying the organization's basic purposes and values are essential to this process of creating "good enough" (Coleman and LaRocque, 1990) school districts.

The study is also timely because North Peace Roman Catholic School District #43 is presently going through a transitional period in Special Education because of the elimination of the position of Supervisor of Special Services. Responsibilities for programming for students with learning disabilities has shifted entirely to the school level personnel. This study is designed to reveal the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the stakeholders involved, their reactions to this change, and their suggestions for future decision-making in this area.

In general, this area of research is of interest to the researcher, is timely for the school district, and may result in some contributions to the menu of practical applications.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to develop recommendations for meeting the needs of learning disabled students, several foci must be investigated. The literature review for this study focussed on four areas related to the process of developing and implementing programs that accommodate the differences of these learners: 1) change as related to innovative educational practices; 2) special education personnel as leaders of educational change; 3) research and theory on intervention strategies used with students with learning disabilities; and 4) integration of students with learning disabilities.

Change as Related to Innovative Educational Practices

When it becomes apparent that practices no longer work as intended, or the population for which a practice was intended has altered in kind and/or numbers, it is time to look at alternative means to meet the needs of the stakeholders. Researchers, Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Philips and Karns (1995) found in their research of specialized adaptations for students with learning disabilities that "when general educators are specifically promoted and supported to engage in specialized adaptation, they do so" (p. 455). To many, change is a frightening concept and involves risks. "All real change involves passing through the zones of uncertainty" (Schon, 1971, cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 31). If change is initiated with stakeholder input into decision-making processes and is gradual, it stands more chance of success and is less likely to intimidate those it will affect. Many believe that implementation of new ideas should be monitored, modified, and evaluated by all stakeholders if there is to be a chance that they will be internalized by the organization and put into practice.

"If people have a chance to be involved in innovation, in change projects, in developing new ideas, new products, new services, new internal systems, you see a tremendous awakening of the human spirit...a renaissance" (Kanter, 1984, p. 42).

The business of educating young people demands that we always need to be asking ourselves if we are actually achieving the goals as set out. We must be able to critique our organizations, our teaching and our leadership. Are we getting the end product we profess to deliver? As Handy (1989) puts it, we have entered the "Age of Unreason". He maintains that change requires upside-down thinking where organizations have to look for new approaches and new ideas if they are to become successful in their mission.

Fullan (1991) suggests that "change must be viewed in relation to the particular values, goals and outcomes it serves" (p. 8). Change is often political. There are numerous reasons other than educational merit that determine the decision to change practices (Fullan, 1991). There needs to be a philosophy behind the change and perhaps policy to guide change. A lack of funding is often a reason to initiate change and/or a deterrent to maintenance of the status quo. Huberman and Miles (1984 cited in Fullan, 1991) stressed that "continuation or institutionalization of innovations depends on whether or not the change gets embedded or built into the structure" (p. 89). . . possibly through organizational elements such as policy, budget, and timetable.

Fullan (1991) suggests that, "it is at the individual level that change does or does not occur" (p. 45). Leaders in school districts have an important role to play. They need to continually evaluate how the organization can foster growth and facilitate learning and progress for all

students. Foster (1986) advocates:

> a critical theory seeks the moral base of decisions and the effects of those particular decisions on the youngsters in our charge. It asks how our organizations impede the learning and progress of students. It asks how we, as individuals, can make a difference. Critical theory is not oriented toward either a return to the past or a destruction of the present. It is oriented toward the possibilities of the future (p. 70-73).

If little teacher involvement is evident in educational change decisions, the chances are, effective change will not happen (Fullan, 1982; McLaughlin and Pfeifer, 1986; McLaughlin, 1990).

Fullan (1982) believe that teachers are the most powerful agents for successful adoption and implementation of an innovation or new idea. It becomes apparent that teachers, as well as other stakeholders, need to be involved in the decision-making process in order for success to be achieved. Teachers tend to be creatures of habit and perpetuate experiences of their own schooling. The school culture has traditionally created isolated, individualistic teaching. This has resulted in little or no shared meaning. A number of researchers have called for increased participation of teachers in decision-making processes, greater classroom and school autonomy, and for an educational climate that encourages interaction and collaboration (McLaughlin and Pfeifer, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1992). Without training and change, teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. New innovations have to allow teachers time to reflect on their practice so they can identify needed changes for self-improvement. "Changes are [also] costly in terms of human energy and time" (Fullan, 1982, p. 27).

Fullan (1982) advocates for "good change processes which foster sustained professional development and lead to

students benefits" (p. 118-119). Schools districts need to identify those good change processes - identification of vision, creation of an ethos that fosters the belief system wanted in practice, time and training for those that have to implement the process, continual support for programs and staff, modifications and improvements based on all stakeholders' input, and continual program evaluation. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) call for collaborative climates for change.

Increasingly evident is the fact that educational institutions are finding it difficult to keep up with this fast-paced, changing society. Programming and process decisions need to be made about what is important, what works successfully, what presently works and needs to be kept, what is not working and needs to be discarded, and what the possibilities are for the future. Part of the role of the superintendency in school systems is to assist principals and other school leaders in creating an atmosphere in which change proposals have a greater chance of successful implementation.

Special education personnel become key players in the process of implementing new ideas and/or programs for students with learning challenges. Their role may involve giving in-services or using motivational techniques with staff, students and parents/guardians. It may involve conversations in the staff room and at meetings. It may involve changes in policy and, more importantly, philosophy. It certainly involves cooperative idea-building. Without question, it involves putting considerable thought into the process. Whichever method or combination of methods is used, caution must be exercised when change proposals are implemented, particularly in the area of special education. Most people are frightened of change and need to be nurtured through the process. Those entrusted with the leadership roles in school districts take on the responsibility of not only educating and involving all stakeholders in the change

process but insisting on their taking ownership for the process, as well. Special education leadership positions in schools become vitally important in the process.

Special Education Personnel as Leaders of Educational Change

Educational leadership is a complex issue. Montgomery, Peters and Ward (1991), in their study on educational leadership in Alberta, agreed that leadership is a complex definition and list twelve points to define it. They summarize by stating

> educational leaders are more than just technical and rational managers of educational processes who are skilled in human relations, though they must have practical skills and knowledge in these matters in order to ensure that students' basic educational needs are met. Educational leaders have a focus on educational matters and a vision and moral purpose which they are able to articulate clearly to others; they can transform that focus, vision, and purpose into commitment by others to work towards achieving an agreed-upon type of effective school or educational system; they can orchestrate and inspire others to maintain this effectiveness on a day-to-day basis; they express and embody the symbolic and cultural aspects of the values and beliefs shared by the others involved in their common educational pursuit; and they fully recognize the environmental realities within which these values and beliefs exist (p. 19).

Coleman and Larocque (1989) argue that "effective leaders actively set out to modify the situation in which they find themselves" (p. 458). They believe that cultural elements are as important as technical elements in educational leadership. In their study of several school districts, successful school districts, "permitted each school to

design its own process within broad district guidelines so as to be most meaningful for its specific purposes" (p. 472).

Administrators play a key role in the success of any new initiatives in a school system. They have a responsibility to see that educational change is well-planned and supported. In the Integrated Services Review for Yellowhead School District #12, a district which instituted a larger scale integration process than North Peace Catholic School District #43, the authors acknowledge that there are ways to ensure an effective change plan for the process of integration:

> [T]he plan must be a comprehensive and well-conceived change strategy, and that once change is made, an organizational system is required to maintain it. The change plan should include, but not be limited to, procedures for all staff deployment, training, supervision and ongoing support systems; student, parent and community information and training; a role clarification for the special education director and the regular school principal; ... provision of related services; development of a system for maintaining the coordination of curriculum and procedures; a specific time-line and assignment of responsibilities for implementing the change plan and ongoing provision of integrated services (Hardman cited in Alberta Education Response Centre, 1992, p. 21).

There are numerous ways that special education personnel can support initiatives that promote integration of students with learning disabilities and educational change.

What special education personnel are the leaders of educational change? First of all, the special education consultant at central office is likely a key participant and, although this person may have expertise in the area of special education, other staff in the system play important roles. Special education teachers in the school provide the

same kinds of service at the school level that the special education consultant does for the district. Regular classroom teachers, because of the nature of integration, become critical members of the special education team because they are ultimately responsible for each and every student in their classes. Teacher assistants have valuable input to share and often the most extensive inside knowledge of individual students. Last, but not least, the principal is always a necessary participant and key to developing desired ethos. This leads logically to a discussion on the "special education team" and its probable role in the process of moving to an alternate service delivery model.

Special Education Team

Many initiatives in schools are the result of the vision of an administrator. Although it is generally understood that process is important in bringing about change, it is also a reality that most changes in education are the result of top-down directives, not always supported by policy. Integration is a fairly new idea in education and promotes the philosophy that all children should have the right to education in their local school in the regular classroom just as any student would:

> School boards and superintendents should concentrate on initiating an effective change plan and special education directors should be the "idea champions" of integration and be very actively involved in its development. If necessary, special education directors should also educate the board and superintendent on the basis for change and the anticipated educational, social, and financial benefits (Alberta Education Response Centre, 1992, p. 19).

The process is on-going and requires extensive nurturing on the part of the director. Hardman (1987) believes special educators should be the experts and should have the role of educating all staff, parents, and senior administration.

Mitchell and Tucker (1992) talk about how we tend to see good educational leaders as hard workers and having expertise. It is that and much more. The special educator as leader "must portray programs as inclusive, child-centered, demonstrating instructional effectiveness, and projecting a positive image concerning the education of all students" (Sage and Burrelo, 1994, p. 256). Bennis and Nanus (1985) believe that leaders must be communicators of purpose and vision, using words and symbols, convening others and helping them understand what Sage and Burrelo (1994) call "the mission of the enterprise" (p. 257).

Little research has been done on the role of the consultant at central office. It is generally understood that the consultant works for the benefit of staff and students, sharing their expertise with staff and supporting school-level administration in their job of running effective educational institutions that meet the needs of all students. In recent years, the trend has been to move consulting services directly into the school. In their study, Holdaway and Millikan (1980) recommend the following with respects to the consulting process:

1. Greater and more effective use should be made of in-school experts by providing them with more non-teaching time for consultation.
2. More intensive in-school orientation seminars should be conducted by administrators.
3. System-level consultation should emphasize specialist services such as diagnosis of learning difficulties, while in-school consultation should relate more to generalist advice....
4. The consultant's role should be redefined to include less administrative responsibility (p. 209).

Consultants tend to be administrators at the system level and often play an important role in bringing about new changes to schools. They are the motivators and spend time nurturing new ideas and initiatives. Although knowledge

skills are certainly necessary to possess, it is becoming more apparent that the personality of consultants, their abilities to motivate and lead people, have much to say in determining whether new initiatives succeed or not. In the Yellowhead Integrated Services Review (1987), researchers discovered that "administrators play a vital role in the success of integration and that specific personal characteristics can affect the outcome of the process" (p. 21). Silins (1992) states "personal dynamics, communication through ideas and example, and a perspective focusing on the group, and collaboration positively influence school outcomes and facilitate school reform" (p. 330).

Roles of special educators in the schools will have to change to become somewhat more administrative and of a leadership nature. In order to facilitate integration, these educators will have the same role as that of consultants and must acquire the same kinds of skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics that make consultants effective in their roles. School-based special educators will have to take on the role of leadership in the area of learning disabilities and provide in-house expertise. Sage and Burrelo (1994) believe that preparing special education staff for inclusion must be the responsibility of the special education director but that the closer the leadership to the actual situation the better chance for advocacy and change. Elmore (1983) writes about "'delegated control'" (cited in Coleman and LaRocque, 1992, p. 472) where control is delegated to those who know how best to do it. We have to make this assumption if we are working with professionals. Professionalism is not just competence but a "commitment to exemplary practice" (Mitchell and Tucker, 1992, p. 46). "Professionalism has a virtuous aspect" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 46). "The thing that makes the leader special is that she or he is a better follower: better articulating the purposes of the

community, more passionate about them, more willing to take time to pursue them" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 47). School-based special educators will need to become the force behind the maintenance of well-developed integration programs.

Success of the integration process may rely on the integration of regular and special education teachers into a unified group, each sensitive and knowledgeable about the other's role. Shared responsibilities requires time for collaboration. Research shows teachers can change curriculum and practice to accommodate individual differences in regular classes when there are sufficient supports in place (Sage and Burrelo, 1994). Little and McLaughlin (1993) concur that "school-level structures set up to foster planning and problem-solving and the consequent development of a supportive school-level professional community and opportunities for reflection" (p. 13) can lead to productive change.

With the introduction of integration into school systems, many participants and key players may find it has become necessary to restructure their roles because of the changes in goals and focus. This may be particularly true for the regular classroom teacher. Elmore (1983) contended that "[i]instead of concentrating on how people behave in received roles with a fixed structure, we should begin to create the roles and structures that support and encourage the educational practices that we want" (p.5). Boyd (1988) says the "trick...is to provide leadership that respects educators as professionals but nevertheless motivates substantial change and improvement" (cited in Coleman and LaRocque, 1992, p. 472). Once again, focus returns to the ethos leaders and school personnel wish to create and the methods they use to create it.

Teacher assistants play an important leadership role in the process of integration and meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. Often they are the regular classroom teacher's first support and can provide more

insight and knowledge on specific students, thereby increasing chances of success. The challenge of integration "requires changes in services and service patterns and relationships between providers, consumers, and supporters" (Sage and Burrelo, 1994, p. 250-51).

"[T]he role of the principal as change agent for educational reform is of singular importance if the reform is to be implemented in a smooth, efficient manner" (Haynes and Blomstedt, 1986, p. 14). Haynes and Blomstedt (1986) believe that "[i]n effecting successful change, the principal acts as the change agent promoting: (1) positive staff attitudes for high morale; (2) proving open, effective communication; (3) providing strong, effective leadership; and (4) consistent efficient and impartial feedback, enabling their staff to grow with the change." (p. 19). Sergiovanni (1992) urges for principals "to be leaders of leaders" (p. 48) and "people who develop instructional leadership in others" (p. 48).

Probably the single most important contribution of the special education team, as leaders of educational change, is to provide the belief that it is necessary to work together to create a vision for the school district in the area of focus. "The absence or ineffectiveness of leadership implies the absence of vision, a dreamless society, and this will result, at best, in the maintenance of the status quo" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p. 228). The growing population of learning disabled students deserve better than the status quo.

Real change in education is an inherently slow process because it usually involves changing deeply rooted belief systems. Fullan and Park (1981) define an educational philosophy as "the articulation of one's beliefs about the students, the curriculum, teaching, the school, the community and ways in which these interact to create the optimum environment for successful learning" (p. 3). They

also state that "clarifying a set of beliefs can provide the foundation necessary for implementing change" (p. 7).

Change may require top-down directives to initiate action; however, there is a need for stakeholders to buy into the belief system if it is to be intimately successful. Fullan and Park (1981) believe that, when implementing a new direction, it is necessary to make adjustments in the belief systems of staff by addressing the potential alterations in materials, teaching approaches or styles, and changes in individual belief systems. They suggest that changes in materials are the easiest to do. Changes in teaching techniques or practices are somewhat more challenging because new skills need to be acquired and additional preparation time is needed. However, changes to teachers' beliefs are the most difficult to achieve because they challenge the core values about the fundamental purpose of education. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) talk about cultures with clear values and vision. Holmes (1993) states "you have to make the "leap of faith" at some stage and make these important connections between values, vision, and leadership" (p. 27). Holmes (1993) believes that vision is sustained by reflection and requestioning, collaborative debate on what is important, and clear transmission about the link between policy and practice.

Sergiovanni (1992) refers to organizations as enterprises. He believes communities must be nurtured and cared for. They should be places where teachers display moral authority and are "cast in the role of serving the enterprise even more than others who also serve the enterprise" (p. 46). He encourages schools to be different from other organizations and more like families or small communities. Sergiovanni (1992) advocates for moral and transformational leadership where school leaders work towards helping staffs develop and maintain collaborative, professional school cultures, where teacher development is valued, and where helping staff problem solve together is

seen as an effective practice. Transformational leadership happens "when leaders are more concerned about gaining overall cooperation and energetic participation from organization members than they are in getting particular tasks performed" (Mitchell and Tucker, 1992, p. 33). Barth (1991) and Little and McLaughlin (1993) suggest that two questions should guide leadership practice: 1) How can school communities be formed in which student ownership and success are collective responsibilities rather than challenges for individual teachers? and 2) How can school cultures be transformed from rigid and solitary systems dominated by norms of privacy into communities whose members share their values openly with one another, reflect constantly on practice, actively critique current situations, and invent new ways of teaching and learning? In order to build shared vision, Sergiovanni (1991) says principals need to be "purposing", in other words, "what principals do to bring about a shared concensus tight enough and coherent enough to bond people together in common cause and to define them as a community but loose enough to allow for individual self-expression" (p. 180). However, Sergiovanni (1992) believes that in communities, people bond together in different ways and it is "less important. . .to worry about who are leaders and who aren't" (p. 48).

Process becomes very important for leaders of educational change to consider. In the process of integration, Lipp (1992) and Sage and Burrelo (1994) support the need to have policy mandated with clear philosophy and mission statement, the need to educate students with learning disabilities just as you would any other student, and the need for programs and services that support unique learning needs. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) state "the presence or absence of mechanisms to address the ongoing problems of meaning -- at the beginning and as people try out new ideas -- is crucial for success" (p. 45). Barkley and Schwartz (1989) suggest that "trying new practises may

lead to a questioning of one's beliefs, or examining one's beliefs can lead to attempting new behaviors" (p. 28).

Once the decision to change has been made, policies developed and the philosophical base has been laid, the practicalities of implementation become apparent. McLaughlin (1990) finds that several conditions need to be present in order for positive educational change to happen and be embedded into the structure through policy:

1. The policy distinguishes between content and process.
2. Implementation dominates outcome; what it is matters less than how it is carried out.
3. The innovations must contribute to the organic life of the classroom and not be add-ons.
4. The commitment of leadership at both district and local levels is essential.
5. Local capacity and will influence practice; local variability is the rule.
6. Adoption is influenced more by embedded structures such as teacher's networks than by policy or formalized structures.
7. Resources or constraints do not predict outcome (cited in Alberta Education Response Centre, 1992, p. 207).

McLaughlin (1988) stresses that "implementation problems are never 'solved'. Rather they evolve through a multi-stage, iterative process" (p. 174).

Special education personnel are important to the success of change initiatives in meeting the needs of learning disabled students. Because of the great demands placed on educators today, there is required change "in services and service patterns and relationship between providers, consumers, and supporters" (Sage and Burrelo, 1994, p. 270). Many believe that this move towards inclusive schooling supports the general move towards restructuring of education (Sage and Burrelo, 1994).

Initiatives such as school-based management seem to support integration efforts. More researchers (Leithwood, 1991; Silins, 1992) seem to support the need for individual differences between schools and less top-down decision-making where a program is implemented throughout a district and expected to function the same everywhere. "School improvement is, therefore, a matter of realigning school programs with the needs and interests of communities, families, students, and school staff. . . the central issue [being] commitment" (Mitchell and Tucker, 1992, p. 34). Any move towards integration or inclusive schooling certainly requires all educators to become more knowledgeable about learning disabilities and possible intervention strategies that can be used with this population of students.

Research and Theory on Intervention Strategies used with Learning Disabled Students

Barbara Meister Vitale (1984) advocates for change in our school systems, in the instruction of learning disabled students, or as she prefers to call them, right-brain learners. She has introduced right-brain instructional techniques that are unique and unusual, but relatively easy to implement in regular classroom settings. Hugh Prather, in a poem in Unicorns are Real, says "when I outgrow my names and facts and theories or when reality leave them behind, I become dead if I don't go on to new ways of seeing things" (Vitale, 1984).

It is time to look at new possibilities for program delivery to learning disabled students. We know that many of our resource room programs have not managed to bring about significant, positive change in these learners (Mulcahy et al., 1987) and, in fact, may be contributing to their lack of success. It is past time to re-evaluate educational practices in this area.

Learning disabled students are characterized by ineffective learning. They are "ameta-learners" as opposed

to "meta-learners" because they operate from external locus of control where others or the environment control their learning. They have negative attributional beliefs about themselves and their abilities and they do not think metacognitively about their learning. When they do learn new strategies, they often lose them or cannot generalize them to new settings. Their performance is inconsistent and many have trouble maintaining their learnings. Derry and Murphy (1986) suggest that "improvement in academic aptitude is most likely to result from a thoughtful, systematic curriculum that is designed to complement direct training in learning strategies and to "engineer" the evolution of an efficient executive controller" (p. 31) or a learner who has control over his/her own learning.

If the education system wishes to improve its success with students who have learning disabilities, we, as educators, have to undergo "perspective transformation, a process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions about the world in which we operate have come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships" (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985, p. 23). In other words, teachers must become more reflective practitioners. They must ask themselves why they do what they do. It is taken for granted that teachers are reflective in their practice, but do teachers truly know or understand the philosophy behind their practice? According to Nolan and Huber (1989) "[t]he reflective practitioner consistently approaches . . . teaching in a thoughtful, curious manner and believes that one of teaching's main outcomes is a greater understanding of the teaching-learning activity" (p. 131). To come to that understanding, it is necessary to review the current literature on learning disabilities and look at the educational possibilities for the population of students with learning disabilities.

Research in learning disabilities has undergone tremendous change over the last few years. Much of what is

known is based on knowledge the education field has acquired from other disciplines such as medicine and neurology. No matter whether a theorist comes from the behavioral, the developmental, the cognitive or the neuropsychological viewpoint they all agree that learning disabled students require improved educational support and instruction in the regular system. Each approach has the same goal: to enable these students to maximize their learning potential so that they become productive members of society. Education needs to address the question of how to enable this population of students to become efficient "self-learners who are capable of self-motivated self-instruction" (Mulcahy, Marfo, Peat, and Andrews, 1987, p.10).

The primary issue facing educators is how can they instill in students with learning disabilities a desire to learn how to learn. Mulcahy and his associates (1987) refer to the work of Vygotsky who believed that learning was a combination of automatic "unconscious acquisition of knowledge [or cognition] and the active and conscious control over acquired knowledge" [or metacognition] (Mulcahy et al, 1987, p. 12). In the forward to John Biggs' book Teaching for Learning, Helga A.H. Rowe states that "students' approaches to learning are affected by cognitive variables, but they are also affected by intentions, motivations, values, interests and the whole context of learning" (1991, p.iii). Taking into account that the context of learning in education is the classroom: "[i]f schools do not relate to the real-life experiences of play or work activities children encounter daily, it is not surprising the enterprises valued in the classroom do not make sense to many children" (Brown, 1982, p.27).

Schools often neglect to provide the link between childhood play and adult learning (Brown, 1982). Whereas some cultures engage in a gradual process that is not interrupted, this is not so with our society. How can we enable students to make sense of learning? Ann Brown (1982)

went on to ask "How is it that some students spontaneously develop the essential learning skills while others, exposed to the same formal schooling, do not" (p. 37)? In order to answer that question, it might be worthwhile to look at the qualities and characteristics of students who are considered successful students or effective learners. Successful "learners are self-regulatory, they actively seek meaning and construct knowledge in ways that are personally meaningful to them, and they deploy learning processes so that they grow in competence in particular content topics, and in particular learning contexts" (Biggs, 1991, p. 4). Successful learners can generalize the knowledge and strategies they have to a variety of situations and settings and, subsequently, maintain that learned knowledge. They are "planful, active and deliberate" (Brown, 1982, p. 45) learners. It becomes crucial for the education system to find realistic ways for the learning disabled population to experience learning in much the same way.

The learning disabled student is characterized by the inability to learn, generalize, and maintain strategies consistently. Brown (1982) suggests these students have mediated learning deficiencies and have difficulty with isomorph, the ability to recognize which strategies are appropriate for which task. Some exhibit general learning disabilities, while others have more specific learning disabilities. One explanation as to why learning disabled students are ineffective learners is that these students may have different reasons or motives for learning that determine how they achieve their own learning. Goodnow (1991) speculates that people have cognitive values about what things are personally more important to learn and these values influence their choice of tasks, the amount of effort they expend and their approach to learning (p. 32). She emphasizes that educators need to convey to students with learning disabilities not only facts and strategies but values about thinking and learning.

According to Nickerson, Perkins and Smith (1985), a desired goal of education might be to attempt to produce learners rather than learned people. To achieve this end is a complex process and requires careful reflection. Vygotsky (1978) believes internalization of skills is gradual and moves towards self-regulation. "Improvement of academic aptitude is most likely to result from a thoughtful, systematic curriculum that is designed to complement direct training in learning strategies and to "engineer" the evolution of an efficient executive controller" (Derry and Murphy, 1986, p.31).

Most researchers today would agree that self-awareness and self-control are important factors in learner success. This is not a new notion. Several authors and researchers in the past have suggested various characteristics that are essential to intellectual functioning. Some programs in the past existed for improving the ability to think and learn. For example, the phrenologists in the 1800's studied the brain's conformation to determine the extent of mental ability of people and experimented with training techniques to improve their learning capabilities (Paris and Oka, 1986). Many others were concerned with training cognitive processes. Bransford and his associates (1985) state there were basically two schools of thought. The first group, "formal disciplinarians", were those who believed people should study such things as Latin in order to develop basic "cognitive faculties" that would enable students to learn in a wide variety of contexts. They believed that general knowledge would lead to improvement in specific knowledge. The second school of thought stemmed from E.L. Thorndike's (1913) "identical elements theory of transfer" which said that transfer occurred through specific not general skills and, therefore, concentration should be on instruction of specific skills (cited in Bransford et al., 1985, p. 201). A wider, more far-reaching scope is needed. These children require specific strategy instruction and general knowledge

instruction, but neither become effective unless transfer takes place to everyday learning situations or classrooms. Once students learn to generalize strategies, they must be able to maintain what it is they have learned. They have to learn how to learn.

What impact did these initial researchers have on the learning disability movement over the years? The two primary theoretical orientations to the psychology of learning disabilities have been the behavioral approach and the cognitive psychology approach. The behavioral approach was the primary focus for the last thirty to forty years. It focuses on the relationship between the environment and observable behavior and looks at how different observable conditions affect the quality of learning. It operates from the premise that the environment could be adapted and modified to match the learner and therefore enable increased learning. It is a teacher-centered approach. Such developmental psychological viewpoints are limited because the student learns unfamiliar material in strange environments. Learning is detached from the environment in which it may well occur and, therefore, requires transfer of skills to take place in order for demonstration of the ability in other settings.

Cognitive psychologists, on the other hand, talk about teaching strategies and look at what good learners do. They believe that intelligence can be changed. They are interested in the individual's capacity to process, store, retrieve and apply knowledge. Emphasis is on the active participation of the learner. Most current practice operates from this stance. The authors of SPELT, a Strategies Program for Effective Learning/Thinking, (Mulcahy et al, 1987) support this viewpoint. Reid and Hresko (1981) state that:

> ...it is important to consider what happens internally to the person who is learning and to view learning as construction. It is the learner who is the most

> important element in the teaching-learning situation; not materials, lessons, teachers, or other factors external to the learner. Effective instruction provides activities (in the broadest sense) to facilitate the learner's ability to construct meaning from experience (p. 49).

Strategy acquisition is seen to take place over a long period of time and requires "systematically designed programs of instruction" (Mulcahy et al, 1987, p. 11).

Cognitive developmentalists regard the learner as the one who constructs knowledge rather than placing emphasis on the teacher, one who imparts knowledge. It is a student-centered view where learning involves eliciting meaning, understanding and interpretation from the world. Such philosophy is demonstrated in Early Childhood programs and current thought frames surrounding such initiatives as "program continuity" and "whole language". Teaching becomes the facilitation of the process. Mulcahy and his associates (1991) comment that research

> suggests that a comprehensive, integrated approach to cognitive-based strategy instruction across all levels of education is one way of effecting positive student change. It may not be what you teach (in terms of particular strategy or material used) but how you teach that is most critical to positive student change (p. 212).

As previously discussed, researchers in the past were aware of metacognitive practice [and its importance to learning] but more focus is now placed on the relationship between metacognitive strategic use and how to teach students to become active learners (Wong, 1986, p. 13).

Mulcahy, in his SPELT workshop, refers to people who exhibit executive control as "meta-persons". These "meta-persons" or meta-learners are efficient in "those internal procedures by which individuals manipulate incoming information to ensure that such information is understood

and retained in a fashion that will facilitate future recall and application" (Mulcahy et al, 1987, p. 18). Students who can control their environment and are oriented to mastery learning tend to be more successful.

What Mulcahy et al. refer to as "ameta-persons" warrants further description and discussion. In addition to these learners having deficient strategies, they explain that ameta-learners display external locus of control versus the internal locus of control that meta-learners use. During the behaviorist era, emphasis was on the teacher controlling the environment for the learner. Metacognitive theory, to some extent, disputes this practice and advocates that teachers need to transfer locus of control to the students and away from themselves. Learning disabled students display learned helplessness and a passive learning style that is maladaptive (McKinney, McClure and Feagan, 1982; Torgeson, 1977). Diener and Dweck (1978) believe these ameta-learners focus on the negatives and engage in escapist behavior. They tend to underestimate success and overestimate failure. If they do succeed, they attribute their success to luck; when they fail, they attribute it to lack of ability (cited in Wong, 1986). They are not motivated because they do not believe strategies will produce results. Learning disabled students need to learn that they can learn from failure (Paris & Oka, 1987). Wittrock (1974) suggests that people tend to have "perceptions and meanings that are consistent with their prior learning" (p. 88).

> Cognitive approaches hold to the belief that learning ability can be improved by training. However, [b]ecause cognitive strategies are internally organized processes, their acquisition, refinement and generalized use can be influenced only indirectly. This, indeed, is a big challenge to cognitive intervention programs because the success of such programs is actually a function of the interaction

between program characteristics and attributes of the target population (Mulcahy et al., 1987, p. 11).

How do educators engage these students in this interactive process? According to Borkowski and his associates (1989), there are four motivations that determine whether strategies will be used by these learners or not: 1) they must have a sense of control over the outcome; 2) they must believe the goals are important and have value; 3) they must be able to manage their skills; and 4) they must be able to interpret whether successes are successes and failures are failures. All these issues of learned helplessness, external locus of control and attributional beliefs contribute to lack of executive control in this population. These researchers hypothesize that if we believe "self-attributions are tightly connected with the use of strategies, generalization should be enhanced by training routines that focus on specific strategies, the executive processes necessary for their implementation, and beliefs about self-efficacy" (Borkowski et al, 1989, p. 67).

What about the role of teachers in this interactive process? It should be stressed that teachers must teach self-monitoring, planfulness, self-checking and self-evaluation (Wong, 1986). These students require repeated exposure to training programs that foster their ability to self-evaluate and self-regulate. These skills are essential if students are to become independent learners (Brown, 1982, p. 41). Teachers have to give students a set of tools for learning, particularly in regular classrooms. To teach cognitive skills is necessary but to extend this process means including instruction in metacognitive skills, as well.

Programs for learning disabled students should involve a combination of metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience, goals and strategies. Metacognitive knowledge is a "repertoire of knowledge and/or beliefs about all factors or variables which influence our cognitive

activities and how these variables act individually or interact among themselves to determine the course and outcome of such cognitive activities" (Mulcahy et al., 1987, p. 13). This includes the knowledge and perception learners have about their connectedness to the tasks and the strategies they use. Metacognitive experience involves linking old to new experiences and practicing self-regulatory strategies for what Flavell (1979) calls "quality control" (Mulcahy, 1987, p. 15). Metacognitive development involves cognitive monitoring. According to Derry and Murphy (1986), students can be taught specific skills, but in order to acquire the ability to know when and how to use those skills, they must be trained in three kinds of metacognitive knowledge: 1) schema knowledge or the ability to recognize what is the main idea or what is cognitively important to know; 2) verbal knowledge about learning or training of planful techniques, metamemory acquisition skills and planned real-world practice; and 3) self-regulation skills (p. 12). The primary distinction between cognitive and metacognitive strategies, according to Brown (1982), is that the latter "involves predicting, checking/self-monitoring, reality testing, coordinating, and control of deliberate attempts to solve problems or to study and learn" (p. 454). Learning disabled students lack this ability and so our educational system must find some way of ensuring that they do acquire these necessary, functional skills.

The primary difficulty in this whole process still hinges on the inability of learning disabled student to generalize strategies they have learned to other times and settings. Brown and Palinscar (1982) believe the reason for this is because, in the past, "trainees had not been taught and did not know where, when, and why they should use the learned strategy" (cited in Wong, 1986, p. 19). Wong states that metacognitive theorists stress that students "must be aware of the purpose and significance of training and the

relationship between the learned strategy and improved strategic applicability" (p. 19). If students are to achieve executive control, they must engage in self-regulatory behavior. They must develop a self-awareness at the onset of a learning situation so that they are aware of what the training can do for them and how they can control training.

Most agree that generalization of strategies and skills does not happen easily with this population of learners. Transfer rarely occurs when they are working from simple to more complex skills. Borkowski and his associates (1989) feel this may be due to the fact that they do not know the strategies well enough, they may not have the necessary higher order executive processes to use the strategies and they may not see the connection between the strategies, and the possibility of success. Training plus feedback make negligible impact. They conclude that strategic training is useful but insufficient. However, there may be potential for using self-instructions as a means of enhancing transfer of strategies. Meichenbaum and Goodman (1971) find internal verbalization techniques that encourage "dialectical thinking" to be beneficial with learning disabled students (cited in Borkowski et al., 1989, p. 62). Numerous 'think-aloud' programs have appeared. Because learning disabled students have difficulty connecting new information to their experiential background, they require some means to develop conscious use of executive processes in addition to specific cognitive strategies and positive attributional beliefs. As suggested earlier in this paper, school learning is so different from everyday learning. "[F]or most students, most of the time, school learning is 'cold', everyday learning is 'hot' (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara and Campionne, 1983, cited in Biggs, 1991, p. 14). Belmont et al. (1982) believe "metacognitive training was the common denominator in 6/7 training programs that did effect far transfer of

tactics utilization" (cited in Derry and Murphy, 1986, p. 10).

Although the value of metacognitive instruction is generally agreed upon, it is necessary to add a word of caution. One of the dangers of any new approach is for people to consider it an educational panacea. Whenever new theories or practices emerge, one should be somewhat cautious and avoid the famous educational pendulum. Wong (1986), with reference to special education, cautions against the tendency towards "faddish impact" (p. 28). She suggests that if metacognitive strategies do not appear to be working that it is important not to reject their effectiveness, because there may be other reasons for the lack of success. On the other hand, she reminds us that metacognition does not account for all learning difficulties in learning disabled students such as possible cognitive and experiential deficiencies and factors related to emotions and self-esteem. Keeping that in mind, it is necessary to take a look at the variety of learning/thinking programs that exist today and perhaps choose one that works for a particular setting.

Learning/thinking programs are often the vehicle used for metacognitive training in the education system. Their purpose is to develop in students their ability to be more cognitively aware and active. Flavell (1979) reports most people do very little cognitive monitoring and so require some kind of systematic learning/thinking training to develop the necessary skills. Programs can teach anything from reading to learning strategies. Several programs focus on the teaching of social skills and stress the importance of integrating the social skills component into any metacognitive learning/thinking program.

If self-regulatory skills are to be internalized, then learning must take place in a social setting (Vygotsky, 1978). Mulcahy and his associates (1987) advocate that social curriculum should be integrated into the system and

not taught as isolated skills. It should be a "curriculum within a curriculum" (1987, p. 45). Mulcahy and his associates insist that social cognition "involves knowledge about "between-person" social relations, . . . as well as about the "within-person processes" . . .[T]he interactive relationship between one's knowledge and processes plays a role in how one learns, thinks and relates with others" (Mulcahy et al., 1987, p. 46). It determines one's level of "social competence" which encompasses self-discipline, internal locus of control, critical thinking skills, intrinsic motivation, attitude, concentration and more (p. 48). Weiner (1983) states, "we are best able to predict and perhaps control what goes on around us if we can identify lawful (systematic) relationships and invariants that explain our own and other people's behavior across a variety of situations" (cited in Mulcahy et al., 1987, p. 49). Higgins and Parson (1984) imply that children with learning disabilities may learn to be more responsible for their own behavior if they acquire appreciation of social situations (cited in Mulcahy, Marfo, Peat and Andrews, 1987). Toro, Weissberg, Guare and Liebenstein (1990) suggest that cognitive results could be the result of social deficits and that perhaps this area needs to be further investigated.

Another common area of focus for metacognitive programs involves the training of learning strategies. Such learning strategies teach students how to learn, and concentrate on teaching students how to organize content so productivity is increased. They teach to student strengths and weaknesses.

Other such programs emphasize the need for a metacurriculum where students actively tie new information to old and monitor its accuracy. Students are taught to employ metacognitive strategies, while at the same time, they are trained to monitor their internal psychological functions. In some programs the teacher serves as a facilitator between students and their other teachers to aid

transfer between isolated skills teaching and the regular classroom. Some encourage students to be reflective and keep daily journals, thereby encouraging metacognitive development and learner accountability. Mulcahy and his associates (1987) state that because learning disabled students are passive learners, they must be taught from a student-centered approach and that "as long as interventions focus on imposed strategies, the generalization problem will continue to plague this area of research" (p. 21).

Several programs use the approach that unless a student's psychological state is positive, he/she will not be able to learn. This approach stresses the importance of students' attributional beliefs to their success and, consequently, learning/thinking programs. There are numerous other learning/thinking programs that use unique approaches.

John Biggs (1991) states that, until recently, research and literature in this area have had negligible effects on education. He affirms the importance of actively involving the learner so that training programs operate from the learner's perspective. General thinking capability can be maximized by the student and "must be inductively derived by students as incidental learning over years of practice" (Derry and Murphy, 1986, p. 5) enabling executive control to occur. Brown (1982) advocates for "cognitive training [programs] with awareness" (p. 48). She suggests training programs require critical thinking elements to them as well as "mediated learning" (Brown, 1982, p. 40) in order to be successful. She promotes the belief that children must develop the potential to learn on their own. Bransford and his associates (1985) refer to the need for precise thinking rather than sloppy thinking (p. 137). Derry and Murphy (1986) call for "cognitive restructuring" (p.8) and the necessity of changing attitudes if success is to be eminent.

Despite the fact that several programs have demonstrated some good success, Derry and Murphy (1986)

caution that, although it is generally agreed that metacognitive strategies can be taught, there is still great debate over how they should be taught.

Learning strategies and thinking cannot and should not be taught through traditional methods because they must "gradually evolve as a function of intelligence and experience" (Derry and Murphy, 1986, p. 5). Executive control of learning for learning disabled students generally requires a gradual process that complements direct training of cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies. John Biggs (1991) refers to this kind of learning as "deep learning" and indicates that it involves an appropriate motivating context, a high degree of active involvement in the learning process, social interaction and a strong experiential knowledge base (p. 219). Education systems need to look at the context in which learning takes place so that problems related to generalization and maintenance are minimized.

Although there is general agreement as to what to teach, the debate will continue as to how to best engage all students, but particularly learning disabled students, in the act of becoming meta-learners. What procedures will be used will, in fact, be determined by what theorists and researchers perceive learning disabilities to be. Presently, there appears to some speculation that neurophysiological approaches involving brain theory may become more of a focus in the future. Despite the orientation, "[t]he choice of which taxonomy to use and which learning skills to train is a matter of selecting what is appropriate for the student population, the training time allowed, and the type of learning material involved" (Derry and Murphy, 1986, p. 32). It becomes increasingly evident that teachers will be facing these students in regular classrooms for most, if not all, of the day and that a multidimensional approach must be used. Perhaps it is time to look at the context of learning in schools.

Integration of Learning Disabled Students

Helga Rowe, in the foreward to John Biggs' book, Teaching for Learning, states that "students' approaches to learning are affected by cognitive variables, but they are also affected by intentions, motivations, values, interests and the whole context of learning" (1991, piii). Taking into account the context of learning is the classroom, it makes sense to implement programs that are primarily integrated into, rather than segregated from the regular classroom: "[i]f schools do not relate to the real-life experiences of play or work activities children encounter daily, it is not surprising the enterprises valued in the classroom do not make sense to many children" (Brown, 1982, p. 27).

Mulcahy et al. (1987), from the University of Alberta, developed SPELT - A Learning/Thinking Strategies Program. They believe that children with learning disabilities should be taught in the regular classroom and that teachers need to be trained to use cognitive and metacognitive instructional techniques with this population. There appears to be a gain in widespread support for this concept. If this is the case, education systems will need to re-evaluate program delivery for these students. Previous to this, it seems that the integration of new material and skills was not happening at the classroom level. Little or no transfer was taking place and, therefore, a solid foundation was not being built for most of these students. As previously mentioned in the discussion about learning disabilities, "[f]or most students, most of the time, school learning [has been] 'cold', everyday learning [has been] 'hot'" (Biggs, 1991, p.14).

No matter the learning environment, most of us would agree that crucial to the success of such programs is a skilled teacher. Madelaine Hunter (1992), a leader in the field of teacher effectiveness, points out that, "regardless

of how the school is organized, teaching competence is still the key to increased student learning" (p.2). She defines teaching competence as:

> a) knowing research-based, cause-effect relationships between teaching and learning; (b) making instructional decisions based on that knowledge; (c) implementing those decisions while continually monitoring and, if indicated, adjusting on the basis of emerging data, including the results in students' achievement during and after instruction; and (d) synthesizing all of the above with skill and artistry, then; (e) evaluating-replanning after instruction (p. 2).

Teachers are the closest to the actual process and the key to change and the overall success of any educational change; therefore, change works better when teachers support it and are given the time, resources and supports necessary to make it work. As well, it is generally agreed upon that program delivery has much to do with the success of any teaching.

If this is the case, detached training cannot continue as it has, because it has been unable to provide realistic context for learning and little generalization of skills has occurred. Models of metacognitive learning/thinking programs will have to become more embedded in existing regular classrooms, although some out-of-class instruction in particular skills may take place prior to implementation in the regular classroom. Teachers will have to learn to work together more readily and become facilitators of the learning process rather than sole dispensers of knowledge. They will have to learn to model desired behaviors and enable cognitive restructuring to occur. There will be a need for compromise between the use of detached versus embedded programs. Inherent in this process will be the need to address the codependence of cognitive and affective instruction. There "is a need for organized curriculum planning that coordinates training of learning strategies across different classes, levels and subjects" (Derry and

Murphy, 1986, p. 14). Unless educational institutions put more reflective thought into practices particular to local situations, the status quo will be maintained and progress is less likely to occur for this population of students. However, Correia (1988) reminds us that "[i]integration must not be an end in itself, it must enhance the educational process, it must be meaningful and appropriate for the individual student, it must be enabling" (p. 9).

Chapter III

RESEARCH AND DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The study is a descriptive, naturalistic exploration of the perceptions of stakeholders: administrators, school-based consultants, teachers, teacher assistants, parents/guardians, and school community members during a specific time period and program implementation. It is a brief historical case study of two schools from North Peace Catholic School District #43 in Peace River, Glenmary and Good Shepherd, and the process that took place over a four year period.

The study used interviews with people who were involved with learning disabled students in North Peace Catholic School District. The study objectives were to:

1) Examine and describe the special education practices/processes/belief systems prevalent in the school system in a four year period;

2) Identify practices that have proven successful with learning disabled students;

3) Identify initiatives by special education personnel and leaders in the district that assisted teachers with the job of meeting the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom; and

4) Make recommendations and suggestions regarding ways to meet the needs of learning disabled students, with the possibility of developing a guiding document for the school district.

The objectives in the study were met through diverse means:

Literature Review - This focussed on change as related to innovative practices in education, special education personnel as leaders of educational change, research and theory on intervention strategies used with learning

disabled students from the past to the present, and the present move toward integration of these students.

Brief Historical Case Study - This focussed on the initial four years of a loosely-structured initiative. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine the perceptions of stakeholders from two schools in Peace River, Glenmary (junior/senior high school) and Good Shepherd (ECS/elementary school): administrators, school-based consultants, teachers, teachers assistants, parents/guardians of learning disabled students, and school community members. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) describe the historical case study as a study of a setting focusing on the development of a particular organization over time.

Document Search - A collection of related and relevant documentation initiated and received by the special education team personnel during the four year period was examined and compiled by the researcher for the district. The result was a Special Education Handbook for the district.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection that was used for the study was the semi-structured interview. Each interview was tape-recorded, with the written permission of the interviewees, and later transcribed by persons uninvolved in the study. Interviews were held at the setting of the interviewee's choice.

The sample for the study was selected from a stratified, purposive population of stakeholders: administrators, school-based consultants, teachers, teacher assistants, parents/guardians of students with learning disabilities, and school community members from Glenmary and Good Shepherd schools in North Peace Catholic School District #43. Stratified sampling was used based on the criteria of equal representation from each group mentioned above. Because the researcher had been a participant

observer in the process for three out of the four years, the researcher chose subjects identified as being effective participants in the process of trying to increase the successful participation of learning disabled students in the regular classroom. Teachers, who work successfully with students with learning disabilities, are usually perceived to be effective instructors by other educators, parents and students. It is likely that these teachers use many strategies and ideas in the regular classroom that increase the success of these students in learning. The superintendent, both principals, and both school-based consultants were chosen. The two community members were chosen because they had extensive involvement with both schools due to the nature of their jobs in the community. One of the community members was also a parent.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of the interview schedule was carried out with one administrator/teacher and one school-based consultant to determine whether or not questions required modification. Changes to the format occurred in those interviews. Responses tended to flow from the initial question and areas not covered by the respondents were probed by the researcher. The settings of the pilot interviews were much the same as the study interviews. As a result of the pilot study, this researcher realized that the data is rich enough from the interviews and thus data collection was limited to this method.

Data Analysis

A grounded theory approach to analysis was used to process the data from the interviews. Guba and Lincoln (1985) refer to naturalistic study as exploratory and emergent, where the study is guided by the problem statement and insights and meaning emerge:

> The naturalist prefers humans-as-instruments for reasons such as their greater insightfulness, their flexibility, their responsiveness, the holistic emphasis they can provide, their ability to utilize tacit knowledge and their ability to process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously with their acquisition (Guba and Lincoln, 1985, p. 245).

The following steps in analysis were used:

Unitizing - The transcribed interviews were divided into units of individually interpretable understanding. These units of meaning were then sorted according to two main emergent themes of this study - the need to provide financial support for the vision and the need to develop expertise within the system. They were arranged accordingly for analysis.

Categorizing - Identified related units under each theme were brought together as the researcher identified emerging themes and units of meaning. Member checks and peer debriefing were used to confirm themes.

Member Check - Respondents were asked to examine, by means of perception checks, the researcher's reconstruction of their responses to interview questions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As well, interviewees were given the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations and findings to ensure no inaccurate or unwanted statements were included.

Peer Debriefing - During the analysis, advice was solicited from peers and the researcher's advisor regarding the process and findings.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made with regard to data collection:

1) Literature is emerging that supports the integration of learning disabled students in regular classrooms;

2) Learning disabled students can be taught to function successfully in the regular classroom with support;

3) Educators will respond professionally to students in their classrooms who have learning disabilities; and
4) Educators in North Peace Roman Catholic School District #43 will respond enthusiastically to being involved in such a study and will be supportive.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to the population of stakeholders of Glenmary and Good Shepherd school in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in Peace River. It is delimited to the time period of the integration process from conception in August 1988 to August 1992. The breadth of the research is delimited by the choice of four foci. Because this study is interpretive in nature, no generalizations or conclusions are sought; only insight and understanding. Transferability to other situations should be made with caution.

Limitations

The limitations of the study include the methodology used, particularly purposive sampling. The scope of sample population used in the interviews and the number of each for the case study are further limitations. As well, interviewer bias exists, because the researcher had been a participant observer and had been directly involved in the mainstreaming process in North Peace Catholic School District #43. It is expected that interview questions and subsequent discussions could, at times, focus on the researcher's involvement and relationship with interviewees.

Trustworthiness of Data

Because this research study is a descriptive, naturalistic study, trustworthiness was achieved through triangulation procedures, frequent member checks, peer debriefing and consultation with an advisor so that complete, insightful descriptions were made with accuracy.

Standards of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were met.

Credibility

Credibility of the data is accomplished by demonstrating that data represents the truth about what occurred so that the reader can get a complete picture of what actually happened in the study. Through triangulation, this was achieved. By carrying out a thorough literature review and document search, and interviewing a variety of people from each of the identified groups of stakeholders, data from such a range of sources, with similar emergent patterns, increased the credibility of the study.

Dependability

Dependability is similar to reliability in quantitative studies. Dependability is increased by providing peer debriefers and the advisor with the steps of the process that were used in the study so that proper procedures were ensured. An audit trail of research notes, reflections, recommendations, dates of interviews, meetings, and other pertinent data was kept.

Comfirmability

The possibility of interviewer bias is always present, and moreso in this situation because of the past key involvement of the researcher in this integration process. Member checks and peer debriefing were done to address the issue of confirmability. The participants and readers assisted the researcher by confirming and modifying findings, so that they accurately reflected information that was relayed by the researcher. Modifications were made to more accurately reflect the input of the participants.

Transferability

Findings in naturalistic studies cannot be generalized to different settings; however, transferability refers to the researcher transferring findings to new situations in which similar characteristics of the original study are evident. The researcher will provide a detailed description of the setting so that anyone wishing to transfer the ideas from this study to a new situation is aware of the differences between situations. Transferability is increased because the researcher provides a complete picture of the context of the study, giving the reader a feeling for the situation of this study.

Ethical Considerations

The study met the ethical guidelines of the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta and was approved by this department.

Once permission from the Board and Superintendent of North Peace Catholic School District #43 was granted to conduct the research, participants of the study were contacted by phone. A follow-up letter was sent to each participant providing information regarding the time of the interview, nature of the interview, responsibilities of the participant and the method of data analysis.

Informed consent was essential. Respondents were asked to sign a consent form agreeing to participate, with the understanding that participation was voluntary and the option existed to opt out at any time during the study.

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and their right to review transcribed interviews. They were asked to verify their agreement with respect to their perceptions. At no time during the report were sources identified, thereby assuring confidentiality.

Summary

This study is a case study and involved the use of interviews and document searches. The researcher made every effort to follow the guidelines for naturalistic research ensuring credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability leading to the trustworthiness of the study.

The original documents having to do with the district's special education program were compiled by this researcher into a handbook consisting of philosophies, policies, procedures, job descriptions, and practical forms. The handbook will be used by the district as the official guide to special education in the district.

Chapter IV

THE RESULTS

Throughout this section the opinions and perceptions of the interview respondents are presented and discussed in relation to the major themes that emerged from the data. Discussion is divided according to interviewees' job titles, with some comparison between the elementary school responses and junior/senior high school responses. Respondents were asked to reply to the question - "What role can special education personnel play in assisting teachers to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?" The respondents had all been a part of the history of change to the special education system in North Peace Catholic School District #43 with the exception of the Superintendent who had been present for the last two of four years.

Support From All Angles

When new programs or ideas are initiated in education, there is a need for support from many sources in order for the program or idea to meet with success. Support can appear in many forms - financial support, staffing, time, resources, training, coordination, communication, and numerous others. Two major themes emerged from interviewees' responses regarding supports that were seen as essential to the integration process and meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities: 1) providing financial support for the vision and 2) developing special education expertise in the system. Interviewees generally believed that once these two supports were in place, all the rest would fall into place.

Providing Financial Support for the Vision

Traditionally each school housed a special education teacher who taught resource room. Teacher assistants were assigned for a very few severe special needs students only. Certified staffing in special education were transferred from the school to central office resulting in a more centralized approach to special services delivery. A general teacher assistant was put into each school to work with students with learning disabilities. School-level administrators had bought into the idea of centralized control of special education at the onset but had not convinced all of their staffs of the merit of such a move, resulting in lack of acceptance for the new model. Aspects of the change were seen as positive; however, many negative responses were indicated, particularly in terms of the lack of school-level personnel in special education to support classroom teachers. Repeatedly, respondents indicated a crucial need to increase funding for personnel if the vision of integration was to become a successful reality.

Administration

The principals stressed that when dramatic change was introduced, support from school-level administrators was important and necessary. Both felt that, initially, principals had not been informed about the extent of the change in special education. This had made their job more difficult as far as selling the concept of integration to staff. It was seen as critical that the change should have been instituted with more input from school-level administration.

The superintendent felt strongly that principals were always the "key players" and must be supportive of their staffs. The principal must be a leader who expresses expectations to staff and "sets the tone" for the school. It was felt that if the principal did not buy into the district philosophy or change schedule and/or if the

principal was not happy with his/her own ability to support staff in their endeavors of meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities, then he/she would not be able to sell the idea to staff.

The principal of Good Shepherd saw the principal's role as being one to create a caring environment where children felt accepted. The principal was to nurture the attitude in people that all children were to be loved and respected. It was the principal's responsibility to create that atmosphere and tradition. It was a mission. The principal did not feel she had to be an expert but rather was a "jack of all trades". The principal made use of people who were experts and delegated the responsibility for the task to them because their input and expertise was valued. The principal empowered people and wanted to be supported financially in the mission to achieve the vision.

The principal of Glenmary saw the role of the principal as one of a decision-maker who, after discussing with staff, set priorities for the school, one of which may be the emphasis on students with learning disabilities. There appeared to be a need to analyze why present systems were not working as well as they should and what could be done to reach these students and all students so that they meet with success in their future. It was felt that the issue of change in special education was symptomatic of the need for change to all program delivery in schools. The role of the principal was to determine, with staff, future directions. He was convinced that school-based management was the way to go and felt that this would allow schools the opportunity to get more innovative, have more "clout" in decision-making, and set specific school priorities.

Both principals wanted good support from the superintendent and the board. They wanted them to be visible in the schools so that they could be knowledgeable about what was happening, thereby allowing them to make better and more informed decisions that affect schools.

Both principals felt strongly that the superintendent and the board needed to truly support the integration decision they had made and not pull support after such a short time. Glenmary's principal felt that if the board and superintendent were to support school-based management, crucial programming and staffing decisions could be left up to the principals and their staffs.

During the first year, it became evident that many things in special education were not working the way they should and that there was a need for more special education personnel in the schools. Both principals were appreciative that the Supervisor of Special Services was able to bring about those modifications, thereby enlisting more time for certified staffing allocations in the schools, in particular, the creation of the school-based consultant positions. The development of this expertise at the school level was seen as being critical to the overall success of integration. Both principals were thankful that people in central office leadership positions supported recommendations from the Supervisor of Special Services and the principals.

Both principals stated that, in education, we tend to "throw the baby out with the bath water" and it is imperative that we stop doing that. We may believe that integration is the way to go but we have to move slowly and ensure teachers buy into the process and belief system. We moved too quickly in North Peace Catholic and it caused hard feelings because teachers and parents felt there was not enough support for the students with learning disabilities or for teachers. The secondary school principal commented that there had never been much support for these students in the secondary school and felt there was still a need for some remedial programs in junior high. He advocated for change towards site-based management and program continuity that would involve all staff and students, yet serve the needs of students with learning

disabilities better. It was felt that decisions for programming and staffing levels should be made at the individual school level.

Both agreed that the change happened quickly and without enough consultation with schools. It was seen to have been just a "money-saving measure" and not based on the belief that integration would better serve the needs of the increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities better than traditional methods. Both agreed the issue of meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities was a complex issue with complex solutions but not much different than the complexities of meeting the needs of any and all students.

All three administrators saw the role of the superintendent as making sure the necessary elements were in place so that teachers could teach and have success. They needed classrooms with a reasonable number of students, basic materials and supplies to teach curriculum, and leadership support from the administration. Of primary importance was the need to ensure the principal was running the school effectively, thereby creating enabling environments in which to teach. As well, it was the superintendent's job to keep the board informed and up-to-date so that board members could make informed and reasonable decisions.

Administrators saw the board as being responsible for ensuring that services were provided as needed. They were the policy-makers behind the vision. However, they felt it was important for them to get into the schools and be visible so that school community members saw them as knowledgeable and supportive of the schools. It was the belief of the administrators that much of the public still saw special education as being a "waste of time and money" and that there was a need for the board to understand what was really going on in the schools so that they could make educated and informed decisions.

The principals felt change had to be a community effort. When a new concept such as integration was introduced, it was important to have leadership from someone with expertise. Both agreed this service could be provided by a central office person but a preferred method would be to have the expertise developed at the school level. This school-level person would need to have regular and special education classroom experience and be seen as having great knowledge and practical teaching skills. Because of the Supervisor of Special Services' leadership and the culture the principals had created in their respective schools, the schools in Peace River had gained a reputation of "really caring about all children". Both had become magnet schools.

The superintendent saw the use of a coordinating, supervising, and testing person at central office as positive and necessary. However, the school principals believed that the position should not be longterm and should only remain until such time as the school-based consultants were trained and well-versed enough to take over the role of "expert" in the area of special education within each school. Because the Supervisor of Special Services was seen as the leader of integration and responsible for handling all areas of special education, all agreed this position was viewed as one that should have been maintained if at all possible until the expertise had been developed at the school level.

The roles of special education teachers were changing and the administrators felt the move towards more of a consulting role with staff was a move in the right direction. They needed to be "in-house experts" so they could help all staff, including administrators, who did not have the expertise in this area. Each school was seen as needing such a person on staff.

Administrators believed the role of parents was to take an interest in their children's education. Schools were seen as needing to dedicate more time towards consultation

time with parents because they should be more involved in the decision-making process. This could, at times, mean a need for additional personnel to cover for teachers who needed to meet with parents and community members.

The superintendent stressed the need for community agencies to work together in coordinated efforts to come up with programs, particularly at the junior/senior high level, that were job skill oriented. Community leaders were seen as needing to work together to bring this about. School personnel required time and/or staffing to coordinate these kinds of efforts. These kinds of recommendations would require increased financial support were they to be implemented.

School Staff

All school staff that were interviewed felt pleased with the district's efforts in the area of special education in comparison to what they saw happening in other schools. There was unanimous agreement that the district had more personnel dedicated to helping regular classroom teachers meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. However, most agreed the elimination of the Supervisor of Special Services' position had been detrimental to integration efforts. The elementary school had not developed the school-based consultant's position as fully as staff would have liked and was floundering a little without that special education expertise and leadership. The secondary school was seen as progressing very well because the school-based consultant was experienced and able to perform that role at the school level with ease. The development of expertise and leadership, whether at central office or at the school level, was seen as the most critical component in the integration process, particularly in these first few years of the initiative. Staff wanted and expected support in terms of certified personnel for the board's decision of integration.

In addition to certified personnel, staff consistently agreed that, because of the nature of integration, non-certified personnel had to be placed in schools to assist regular classroom teachers. One general teacher assistant per school was seen as critically inadequate and staff believed the ratio of general teacher assistants to students must be increased.

Consultation time was seen as a critical component in the process of integration. Consultation among all the stakeholders - consultants, teachers, teacher assistants, parents, relevant community members, and sometimes students was necessary. Staff needed time for meeting, time for planning, and time for evaluation. It was felt some of this time needed to happen during the day during school hours, rather than after school hours all the time as was currently happening. If staff was to work for the benefit of these students in the most effective way, they needed to use a team approach. This time could only be created if more certified personnel was allocated to each school thereby creating that flexibility in timetabling.

Most staff figured that integration likely had some increased costs over segregated delivery of programs. However, in addition to believing integration was the "right" way to go, they believed these students spent majority of their time in regular classrooms anyway, even if they were in a shortterm, pull-out program. Pull-out programs did not alleviate the difficulties for students once they returned to the regular classroom each day after the pull-out program. Staff was still needed to help them during the remainder of the day. All staff that was interviewed believed, until the district had initiated the integration process, students were often ignored for the rest of the day. Pull-out programs were sometimes seen as a way to appease consciences rather than as a way of providing the most effective programming. Given the cost/benefit factor, time and effort with students with learning

disabilities ultimately led to success with all students thereby making the costs worth it and more justifiable to the general public.

Community

All community respondents expressed some serious concerns about school boards in general and their lack of understanding about the area of learning disabilities. They felt that because learning disabilities are usually "invisible", board members often do not recognize the need to do something for these students. They stated that seldom do board members have children of their own who have learning disabilities so do not relate to, or understand the complexity of the issue and, therefore, do not place significant value on the need to address this area of concern. They commended the school district for its out-of-the-ordinary vision but were extremely concerned about recent cuts to special education, particularly the loss of the Supervisor of Special Services' position.

Parents and community members believed that it was likely school-level administration and staffs would be the most capable of recognizing what personnel was needed to meet the needs of the learning disabled students in their respective schools. They felt central office administration should respect their views and support their requests for staffing. They were particularly in favor of the school-based consultant positions and felt all schools would have more success with these students if they had coordinating teachers in that role. These consultants were seen as decreasing the possibility of students "falling through the cracks" because they took ownership for all special education students in the school. They believed teachers, in talking with school-level administration, were the ones who knew how many teacher assistants were necessary to make the program viable.

One area all parents and community members agreed on was that teachers had the time for meeting with parents and community members, if they chose to make that a priority. They did not feel, however, that parents should be in a position to determine how much time each teacher or teacher assistant required for consultation time. That kind of task should be left up to the professionals. They just wanted the communication to be there for them and wanted to be allowed input into children's programming.

It was evident that community members and parents were opposed to any cuts in services to students with learning disabilities and saw a need for increased funding, if anything. They strongly expressed the view that "if we do not pay now, we will pay later".

Developing Expertise in Special Education

The change to the special education system in North Peace #43 affected all stakeholders in the district. In most of the schools change was implemented quickly and without stakeholder participation in the decision-making process. It was seen to be a top-down decision with little or no input from the school level. As a result, initial acceptance for this innovative approach to special education was very limited.

It was soon recognized that if the needs of students with learning disabilities and other special needs were to be met, some expertise would have to be developed within the system and in the schools. First, it would be necessary to decentralize some of the services to the schools. Special education teachers would have to become the "experts" in the schools and provide consultation services to regular classroom teachers. Second, training and professional development for staff was necessary to empower all personnel to respond in a capable manner to the task of teaching these students. Third, not only would certified staff, non-certified staff, parents, and community members need to

develop more specific instructional expertise, they would need to acquire much more knowledge about learning disabilities. Finally, students would need to develop more independent, lifelong metacognitive abilities to learn.

The change in delivery of special education programs affected each school differently. However, one facet that each school had in common was that regular classroom teachers were not prepared to take on the full responsibility for every special needs student's programming, as well as delivery of programs. In order for the program to work, it became evident very early on that major changes would have to happen that facilitated the process of meeting the needs of school staff so that they felt able and capable of doing a good job with learning disabled students in the regular classroom. The need for extensive in-service and professional development for teachers and teacher assistants was very evident. The more readily accepted belief that teachers must be teachers of all students led to teachers willing to try new and sometimes "far-out" techniques to reach students and parents.

Aspects of the new model were seen as effective, particularly the fact that local testing was readily available. Follow-up was almost immediate, thereby enabling ongoing and personalized support for students with learning disabilities, regular classroom teachers, and parents. This access to information increased all stakeholders' knowledge and led to more effective programming and remediation for students with learning disabilities.

Administration

The change in emphasis from segregated services to integrated services was, in the superintendent's opinion, seen by most as being a good one after a somewhat shaky start the first year. Once more special education personnel was reinstated in the schools, administration felt staff

appeared to be more comfortable with the level of support for regular classroom teachers, although there was still some concern about the level of expertise within the schools.

All administrators stressed the importance of having someone in the role of the special education "expert" who was accepted as an expert by all other stakeholders. The job entailed supporting teachers and staff, in-servicing personnel and parents, testing students, case conferencing with parents and staff, and developing programs and plans for students with learning disabilities jointly with teachers. The supervisor was to keep up-to-date on all the latest developments in special education as well as work closely with community agencies. The idea of using school-based consultants was seen as working well, but some of them were viewed as needing more special education expertise and training. In the fourth year, without that expertise, special education services seemed to be floundering, resulting in some panic by personnel in the schools. The abolition of the Supervisor of Special Services' position was seen as negative because the expertise at the school level had not been developed like it needed to be.

The superintendent strongly expressed his opinion that teachers must take responsibility for every student in their classroom and find teaching techniques that work for each individual child no matter how long it takes to find that particular technique or strategy. He stressed that if teachers taught by objectives in their daily plans, more metacognitive emphasis would be placed on teaching and meeting individual student needs. Every teacher was seen as having to take on more of a leadership role in integration and learn to be a "teacher of all students". Primary teachers were seen as having particularly challenging jobs because it was in the early grades of a child's school life that the tone for school was set.

Administrators proposed that there was a need to teach students to think metacognitively about their own learning through courses such as Learning Strategies. Emphasis would be on teaching learning styles and study and learning skills. Administrators agreed there was "still too much of a tendency to teach subjects rather than students".

It was generally believed that effective teachers are good about coming up with new ways of getting a concept through to a student. They keep looking for ways and never give up on a child. "Their belief is that their job is to teach the student and turn him/her on to learning." The superintendent referred to this ability as their "withitness".

Ineffective teachers were described as those who give up on students and blame the student if the student is having trouble learning. Ineffective teachers tend to teach content not students. They, also, tend to blame the home.

The administrators stated that there is always a need for more professional development and were supportive of efforts in this area. Workshops that would help staffs work with all students were considered important and more relevant because they did not single out one "kind" of student. Rather, they emphasized all students. It was seen as important for all school staff to keep up with the latest ideas in education.

Early on both principals recognized that teachers needed to become much more knowledgeable about learning disabilities and take ownership for the learning of these students in the regular classroom, something which had not always happened. Most teachers were seen as having the desire but not necessarily the skills. Traditionally these students were supposedly integrated in junior high but only because there were no services available to them at all. Because of the very directed awareness campaign initiated by central office and the administration, teachers soon recognized that there were many learning disabled students

in their classrooms and often little or nothing was being done to address their special learning considerations. As a result, teachers began to recognize they needed training and started requesting it. The principals felt that teachers became more effective instructors because they were recognizing learning disabilities and seeing them in a more positive light. They were seeing learning disabled students as part of the regular classroom teacher's responsibility. They began seeing learning disabilities as differences rather than problems and began to take it on as their responsibility to teach them how to learn. The administrators agreed this was a definite step forward in education in this rural school district.

Teachers began to try different teaching approaches and they learned to recognize the need to modify programs in the regular classroom, the second important step in the process of meeting these students' learning needs. Students were learning coping skills and experiencing success in the regular classroom. However, both principals stated that teachers still asked the question "Is this just a bandaid solution?" There were numerous questions about how to actually remediate deficiencies. Teachers learned to ask for help when they did not know what to do or what to possibly try. They learned to consult. The principals agreed that more time was needed for teachers to meet with outside experts, with the school-based consultant, with teacher assistants, and with parents but that it was not always possible.

The administrators saw great things happening with new teaching ideas emerging. Teachers gradually became more open to trying things like team teaching and student-led interviews. Administration agreed that most teachers were very good and diagnostic in their practices. Teachers could bring out the best in students. The success of new programs or teaching strategies depended greatly on teachers and whether or not they accepted the change or new idea. The

elementary school principal emphasized the importance of teachers feeling comfortable and ready to tackle new situations or challenges. Many needed to have in-service sessions and over a long period of time, some much more than others, until they felt comfortable. Both principals stressed the need for regular classroom teachers to take on leadership roles in the area of learning disabilities. They needed to do whatever it took to acquire the skills and expertise required to be successful with students with learning disabilities, and their parents.

Teacher assistants' roles were seen as valued and important to the process of integration. The elementary school principal stated that teacher assistants want job descriptions and clear expectations. They want to feel valued, and appreciated efforts that were made to acknowledge their dedication and service. All the administrators agreed that all the teacher assistants wanted and needed more professional development because few, if any, were trained to work with special students. Teacher assistants were viewed as being important to the success of the changes in this area.

Parents were seen as being very important in the process and invited to participate fully in their children's education. They were viewed as needing support from the school staff and in-service on their children's individual needs, too. It was felt that parents needed to be able to make a connection with someone who could relate to them and make them feel comfortable with accepting their children's differences. The elementary school principal stated that parents wanted to feel "that everything was being done that could be done for their child" and that their children "would not get lost in the crowd". They needed reports, regular, effective communication, consistency, transfer of information from teacher to teacher, and support from the school personnel. They wanted their children to be happy.

It was felt that they should be listened to with regards to new initiatives that affect their children.

There was a strong feeling that everybody in the school community needed to feel valued and that their roles were important to the overall success of the initiative. The secondary school principal stated that community involvement was particularly needed at the junior/senior high level for work experience and job shadowing programs. If people were going to work with these students, then they needed to develop some kind of understanding and expertise as to how these students learn and work whether that be in the school, the home, or in the community.

School Staff

All school staff were more adamant in their views supporting the need for developing special education expertise if there was to be any kind of success in the area of learning disabilities. There appeared to be unanimous agreement that, at this time, there was still a need for the supervisory position at central office. The idea of having a person who was there and on the scene to oversee special education was seen as more valuable than bringing in outside people to do assessments and case conferences. That traditional method had not been viewed as being effective and staff was more pleased with the accessibility of a person in the school district. They had developed a trust in the person and were feeling much more secure in their abilities to handle students with learning disabilities. However, staff believed the ultimate goal would be to have that service operating effectively out of the school and were very supportive of the school-based consultant concept as long as the school-based consultant had the skills and expertise to handle the position effectively.

Both staffs expressed confidence in the school-based consultants' abilities to learn and take over the role of the "expert". Because of the transient nature of teachers

in rural Alberta, there was some concern about whether or not continuity, not only in programming but in the attitude and belief systems of people, would be fragmented when certain individuals left. All agreed that the move towards integration, if it was to continue with any kind of success and dedication, must be embedded in policy. To this point, it had not become policy.

The role of the school-based consultant was seen as critical to the success of meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. Teachers felt the consultant needed to work very closely with the supervisor and be very familiar with most of the curriculum. They felt it was necessary for these consultants to have regular classroom experience, special education expertise, assessment background, good communication skills, and some administrative ability if they were to be effective in their roles. Staff saw the primary role of the consultants being one of support for regular classroom teachers and teacher assistants, with a focus on programming and planning, rather than assessment.

All school personnel agreed they had acquired quite an extensive knowledge in the area of learning disabilities over the last few years and had worked diligently to implement new strategies and ideas that work with these students. Most staff believed they were very comfortable with learning styles and practice in that area, particularly at the elementary level. Most were adept at modifying the curriculum and programs for the students so they would be successful in the classroom. Modified individual education plans were developed in the system and most teachers and teacher assistants could draw up their own students' individual education plans with little or no assistance from the consultants. Because regular classroom teachers recognized they were responsible for every student in their classrooms, they took ownership for the programming and evaluation for each student. Without question, there was

more success experienced at the elementary level than at the junior/senior high level in bringing teachers to this point. However, most secondary staff were beginning to feel more capable in this area, as well.

Staff who were interviewed agreed that once teachers saw a few lead teachers having success with these students, they became more open to trying new ideas in their classrooms. They became less fearful of the change. Consultants did many in-service sessions for the staff and community, some formal workshops, and some very informal discussions around the staffroom table. One consultant stated she "was a constant resource person and had to be on call for staff". Staff perceived that the system had done a good job of providing professional development for them over the course of the last few years. Teacher assistants reported that, when they attended teacher assistant conferences in the city, they felt they were far more knowledgeable and advanced in their thinking and attitudes about learning disabilities than their city counterparts in the rest of the province. However, all staff recognized a significant need for more staff training and, in particular, teacher assistant training.

Many specific ideas were introduced to teachers and teacher assistants but all agreed the most effective ideas came from ideas conveyed to them from the Supervisor of Special Services and the school-based consultants. These "experts" had acquired much of their information from the Learning Disabilities Association, Barbara Vitale's workshops, and, in particular, other teachers. Specific skill instruction was given to teacher assistants, as well, so they could help students incorporate these skills into the classroom. A major focus for most was an emphasis on students acquiring techniques to improve their abilities to listen, to organize, to stay on task, and to study. The teacher assistants reported that, although at one time some of the students were not open to teacher assistant help in

the classroom, students were becoming more receptive to their assistance. This was likely because the teacher assistants had become so much more visible in the schools now, as well as the fact, they worked with a variety of students in many classrooms and not just students with learning disabilities. The students were almost as receptive to their assistance as that of a teacher. One teacher assistant revealed - "I used to think they did [mind being singled out] but now I see them even wanting to work outside the classroom so there are fewer distractions." Teacher assistants saw their role as being that of a facilitator more than as an instructor. They were to facilitate the learning process by working with small groups, scribing, reading and interpreting instructions, giving oral exams, and, generally, teaching students coping strategies for the regular classroom. Their role was to offer support where students and teachers needed it and requested it. The elementary school teacher assistant stated that, in addition to the teaching/facilitating role, a big part of the job entailed teaching pro-social skills. The Learning Strategies program at the junior high level was seen as particularly effective and the elementary school was considering implementing a modified form of the program.

Effective teachers were seen by all interviewees as teaching students rather than content. They were teachers who look for students' strengths and did not see weaknesses as negative. One teacher reported the need to evaluate students at a level where they could succeed by setting achievable goals for them and acknowledging them when they reached a goal. Effective teachers were identified as having good rapport with all students and, therefore, usually with the parents, as well. Students knew these teachers liked them and wanted them to be in their classrooms. Staff did identify, however, the fact that students need and want good discipline, high but realistic expectations, and structure in a classroom. Students

respected teachers who operated classrooms with those kinds of expectations and qualities. Teachers and teacher assistants stated one of the important characteristics of an effective teacher was the willingness to be flexible and try new ideas. If one idea did not work, these teachers were willing to persevere until they found something that did work. They modified programs easily and discreetly. They were usually advocates of cooperative learning and used the strengths of other students to complement the students with learning disabilities. Teacher assistants were appreciative of teachers who maximized the use of their teacher assistant's expertise and worked with them as a team.

Ineffective teachers were seen as being "closed" and not effective with any students. They taught subjects rather than students. Staff felt students saw them as "not caring". As a result, they had little or no rapport with these students. They were closed to new ideas and did not want these students in their classrooms because they saw them as "lost causes anyway", particularly if any behavior problems existed. More importantly, they did not want to do the work that was needed to be done and did not see it as their responsibility to teach these students. Often they were seen as being uncomfortable with these students and not knowing how to help them. If they were not being successful with a student, they blamed the student for the failure, rather than looking at alternate teaching methods and ideas. These teachers were seen as not supportive of integration concepts because they preferred to have these students out of their room in a segregated remedial program. Teacher assistants found it especially difficult to work in these teachers' classrooms.

As the initiative progressed, it was obvious there was an increase in most teachers' confidence. Students and their parents began to feel the same confidence in the school staff's abilities to teach effectively. Students were taught to be their own best advocates once they were

cognizant of their own learning styles and the instructional methods that worked for them. Everyone began to expect these students to succeed and many of them did. Once that success was experienced, the student liked how it felt and wanted to feel success again. Once students were feeling good about their achievements, parents began to appreciate, value, and support the teachers' and schools' efforts, as well. Teachers felt it was extremely important for the system to continue to spend time and effort educating and training parents along with staff so that there would be carry-over to the home. Staff believed parents began to take more responsibility at home by spending more quality time on homework and organizational and study techniques. As one teacher put it - "If you understand a little bit about what the child is going through, then maybe you have a little bit of understanding and a better attitude."

Staff in school supported administration's beliefs that smaller classroom numbers were imperative. Due to the nature of students today, staff believed more success would be likely if teachers and teacher assistants could have more small group or one-on-one contact, something that is difficult to do when classes are large. They saw school-level administration as the key people in relating needs and concerns to the superintendent and the board. All staff felt their administration in the school supported them well in their endeavors to meet the needs of all students.

Community

Community members and parents that were interviewed expressed strong support for the Catholic system for their work in the area of learning disabilities and special education. They felt that both schools had earned reputations for delivering quality programming for all students and, in particular, learning disabled students. They were impressed with many of the things they had experienced as parents and as community members who work

with families and children. They had heard good things about the majority of teachers in both schools. It was apparent they agreed with the vision of integration in the school system and, although they were not sure if they were entirely supportive of total integration, they felt success was obvious in most regular classrooms in the system. They believed much of this success could be attributed to the expertise that was provided to staff, students, and parents from the Supervisor of Special Services and school-based consultants.

One concern centered around individual teacher's success or lack thereof with individual students. They advocated for increased training and acquisition of what they considered to be "the right attitude towards these students". Two of the respondents were pleased about the extensive professional development initiatives happening in the school system. They felt the Catholic system was seeing more favorable results with these students because personnel and money had been attached to the initiative. They were appreciative of the system's close involvement with the Learning Disabilities Association and joint professional development initiatives with various community groups and agencies. They expressed grave concerns about the elimination of the central office supervisory position, stating that it would be detrimental to teachers' efforts in the classroom and was a step backwards for the learning disabilities movement. They strongly advocated for reinitiating that central office support so that the leadership in the district to support the vision of integration continued.

Although both parents recognized the need for remediation of specific skills, they agreed that there was great potential for damage to children's self-esteem when segregated from the regular classroom, particularly as the student became older. If children were to attend resource rooms, "they should not be left there forever". They

expressed some concern about the lack of communication among teachers, particularly when it came to passing information on from teacher to teacher, year to year. All community respondents believed that, if there was to be any kind of success with students with learning disabilities, teachers would have to learn how to meet their needs in the regular classroom. Supports in terms of manpower such as consultants and teacher assistants would be necessary. As well, smaller classes would be important. However, they believed that much of the possibility for success depended on the individual teacher's attitude towards the student and the teacher's ability to acquire the necessary supports to offer an appropriate program geared to the child's needs.

They saw effective teachers as having caring, understanding attitudes towards children with learning disabilities. They believed them to be the ones who were good with all students and taught in a student-centered approach. These teachers had the expectations for their students that they were going to succeed and used a large variety of teaching strategies and techniques. They kept themselves updated on new developments in education and were interested in trying new things. Two of the respondents saw effective teachers as ones who had knowledge on all disabilities and welcomed the challenge into their classrooms. They were the teachers who would emphasize individual learning strategies and acknowledged learning styles research. The community members and parents saw these teachers as having energy, commitment, knowledge, skills, and creativity. Of these, they felt that knowledge was the key.

They saw ineffective teachers as those who labelled children as "lazy", "uncooperative", "non-motivated", and "unteachable". They were the ones who were quick to give up on these students and did not believe it was their responsibility to reach the child. All agreed that these teachers did not have rapport with these students and often

not with most students. Respondents indicated strongly that these were the teachers who made it obvious they did not want these children in their classrooms and would have "preferred them to just go away".

The respondents stated they have great respect for individual teachers but expressed some real concerns about the teaching profession and the profession's apparent inability to address issues in this area. Of particular concern was the whole issue of university training for prospective teachers. They stated that there was a need for new teachers to have more knowledge and expertise in the area of learning disabilities and special education. They felt universities were not turning out teachers who, on a whole, are comfortable with their new roles.

The community members talked about the need for a "people's movement" similar to that which happened with the integration movement for persons with mental and physical handicaps. They concurred with staff that, because the disability is invisible, it is often not recognized as it should be and this makes efforts in addressing needs even more difficult. The big decision-makers in education, school boards and administration, had to be reached and be made to understand learning disabilities and the longterm effects to society if learning disabilities are not addressed in schools. They believed this could only be accomplished through strong leadership from central office and school principals. However, if the personnel in those positions were not addressing these issues and trying to meet the needs of these students, then parents would have to put pressure on school boards and demand their students' rights to quality education. If legislation was necessary, then that would be the route they would choose to go. Up to this point, they saw the Catholic system as being much more successful in this area and commended the board and administration for their foresight.

The parents and community members discussed the importance of parent involvement in their children's education. They stated more parents need to take an active interest and could not expect the schools to do it all. They should work closely with school personnel and be willing to become more educated themselves about their own child's particular disability. They could not expect "quick fixes". One parent commented "we do not accept the attitude that only educators know how best to deal with our child". The parents felt they had much to offer their children's teachers in helping them have success and advocated for increased parent/teacher cooperation.

Community members and parents insisted success with students with learning disabilities was only possible if all stakeholders worked very closely together to communicate needs and ideas. Everyone must be committed to the endeavor and integration could only work if stakeholders were comfortable and supportive of the vision. Trust had to exist between all parties. The two community members had extensive involvement with the two schools and felt North Peace Catholic School District #43 was a leader in the province in this field. They concurred that the fact it was a small, rural system was not detrimental but rather allowed for small changes to have great impact.

Some Thoughts on Integration

The issue of segregation versus integration is still widely debated and not everyone agrees on how to best meet the needs of students who require specialized training in one-on-one or small group settings. Most interviewees felt the elementary school teachers and staff tended to adapt more easily to the idea of integration in philosophy but had more difficulty actually putting philosophy into action. They believed this was likely because they had experienced more extensive pull-out programs in operation prior to the initiative than did the secondary school who had operated no

remedial or pull-out programs. However, secondary teachers were perceived as having taken much longer to accept responsibility for teaching students with learning disabilities and planning modified programs. Because teacher assistants played such crucial roles in the new delivery model, teachers and administrators who treated teacher assistants as colleagues with special skills who were critically important to the integration process and were comfortable working with teacher assistants in their classrooms, were seen as being more successful with the integration of students with learning disabilities by fellow staff members and parents and community members.

Without exception, all interviewees viewed the process of integration in North Peace Catholic School District #43 as more successful than traditional segregated programming in other schools. Interviewees felt that students were enthusiastic about being integrated into the regular classroom, particularly the further on they went in school. Although some pull-out was still being done, perceptions indicated that it was limited and very specialized programming. Most students who accessed pull-out assistance were happy with it. On a whole, the stigma of pull-out programs was being eliminated. All agreed that integration was forcing teachers to recognize that it is in the best interests of all students to be seen as the responsibility of the regular classroom teachers. Regular classroom teachers had been traditionally responsible for these students for most of the day anyway and the only time they were not was when they attended a resource room. Several interviewees expressed concerns about whether or not integration would be successful with behavior disordered students and questioned whether schools, staff, other students, and the community wanted these students to be integrated unless there were sufficient manpower and resources to remove them when necessary. Despite the supports and initiatives in place to complement integration,

some of the interviewees still felt there was a need for some remedial help. However, they were not sure how to offer this assistance without the possibility of students acquiring negative stigmas and feeling inadequate.

Most agreed there were conditions that could facilitate the process of integration so that more success was evident. Smaller class sizes were seen as crucial, particularly at the lower elementary level. Teacher assistants were seen as necessary to work with behavior disordered students or those who cannot focus and attend to tasks. It was felt that teacher assistants needed much more training because so few have any training.

Integration was viewed as a very worthwhile goal. However, a combination of a pull-out remedial system, use of school-based consultants, modified regular classroom situations with teacher assistant support, and counselling was seen to be the most efficient system. Most interviewees advocated for more counselling services in all schools. Reservations about total integration was evident among all stakeholders, but this was likely due to the fact that resource rooms were seen as doing good remedial work for some students. Staff at the secondary school saw this new process of integration as providing more support for students with learning disabilities. In the past there had been no remedial services available to students in the secondary school so the provision of a school-based consultant and teacher assistants was an increase in staffing and support for these students. Several stressed that learning disabilities and academic difficulties do not go away once students hit junior high, but practice in the past would have led one to believe that was so.

Most agreed the process of integration, although somewhat painful for many teachers, had proved to be beneficial. More teachers were taking responsibility for all students' learning and becoming more comfortable doing so. Unanimously, people were pleased that the focus of

education was changing to an emphasis on learning strategies that work for all students not just those who have learning disabilities. The openness to new ideas and strategies by all stakeholders was seen as very positive and, interestingly enough, not only beneficial to students with learning disabilities, but to teachers, as well.

All were appreciative of any support efforts from central office and saw the role of the school-based consultants of primary importance to the integration process. There was a recognition for the need for more time allocation for the school-based consultants because there appeared to be insufficient time to handle all the responsibilities of such a position. Teacher assistants were seen as crucial to the success of integration and a definite need for more teacher assistant time was expressed by both principals and their staffs. A need for more training was seen as essential.

Several blocks were identified to the process of integration and meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. There was concern that not enough time was available for teachers to meet with teacher assistants, school-based consultants, parents, and community members. This consultation and planning time was seen as critically important if integration was to succeed. Class sizes were identified as being a block to integration. In the minds of most interviewees, both these issues could be addressed by providing additional teachers to their staffs. Interviewees emphasized that lack of funding and support was going to affect the integration process to the detriment of students with learning disabilities. If more of these kinds of supports were not put in place, not only would students with learning disabilities suffer but so would so-called "regular" students. Integration was believed to likely be more costly not less, but more worthwhile.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study involved a brief historical case study of a newly created district special education implementation in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in Peace River over a four year period. It was intended that full integration of all special needs students should result. Using the expertise of a Supervisor of Special Services out of central office, the concept was initiated, developed, evaluated and modified with the hope of maintaining it indefinitely. The special education program was intended to address the needs of all students with special needs in a more effective way than in the past, but especially students with learning disabilities.

This study looked at what role special education personnel could play in assisting teachers to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Discussion Around Stakeholders' Key Issues

From the Superintendent

Discussion with the superintendent indicates a need for teachers to become teachers of all children. This researcher agrees with him that the integration process that was initiated in North Peace Catholic was doing much to bring about changes in the attitudes of regular classroom teachers. They were beginning to take more responsibility for all the students in their classrooms and feel comfortable with their own abilities to accomplish success with these students. They had acquired some useful, successful techniques and skills to use with these children. Mitchell and Tucker (1992) express concern that staff must "direct their effort to building and strengthening organizational norms and attitudes. . . . believing that

quality education will arise when professional staff agree about educational goals and the effective strategies for their attainment" (p. 32). Little and McLaughlin (1993) support this view stating:

> cohesive and highly collegial environments are also settings in which teachers report a high level of innovativeness, high levels of energy and enthusiasm, and support for personal growth and learning . . . where teachers are enthusiastic about their work, and where focus is upon devising strategies that enable all students to prosper (p. 151).

This researcher concurs with the superintendent that more still needs to be done to train teachers to think metacognitively about their practice (Mulcahy et al, 1987).

Principals are the key players in setting the tone for their schools (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976; Leithwood, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1991; Fullan, 1991; Leithwood, 1992; Holmes, 1993) and, therefore, have the ability to bring about the attitudes needed from staff. This researcher supports the view that principals are to ensure that philosophy and vision are turned into action. They must access the expertise of the special education personnel to train staff, consult with staff, and support teachers in the task of meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities.

From the Principals

The principals of both schools and this researcher agree that school-based management of special education would be the ultimate goal because of the potential benefits of school-level decision-making. Sage and Burrelo (1994) state "this shift toward an inclusive school philosophy is compatible with the underlying principles of the movement toward a general restructuring of education" (p. 270). Leithwood (1992) supports the need for individual differences between schools and less top-down decision-making where a program is implemented throughout a district

and expected to function the same everywhere. "School improvement is, therefore, a matter of realigning school programs with the needs and interests of communities, families, students, and school staff" (Mitchell and Tucker, 1992, p. 34). This researcher believes that school-based management will lead to some interesting, creative ideas that should benefit students with learning disabilities if needs are recognized at the school-level and emphasis is placed on addressing those needs.

Although the services and the expertise of the Supervisor of Special Services is appreciated, it is suggested that the expertise be developed and passed on to the role of the school-based consultants at the school level. As well, if funding was managed by the schools, principals, in conjunction with their staffs, could determine their priorities. Sage and Burrelo (1994) support the importance of schools learning to problem-solve and come up with innovations that are effective and work for their individual situations. In order to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, they could make decisions regarding the hiring of special education personnel, counsellors, and regular classroom teachers, class sizes, professional development needs, and actual program set-up. School-based management is seen as the means of achieving more school autonomy and accountability, a way of creating a collaborative work culture (Sage & Burrelo, 1994).

From the School-Based Consultants

Both school-based consultants recognize the key issue around meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities as one of insufficient personnel, certified and non-certified. If regular classroom teachers had enough support from school-based consultants, on a regular basis and as need dictates, and access to teacher assistant help, particularly in core subjects, they would be even more open

to the process of integration. Correia (1988) supports this and states that further integration may require more paraprofessional staff. The key to integration surviving in North Peace Catholic School District is to bring regular classroom teachers on side so that they support the initiative. That will not happen unless they are sufficiently supported to do their jobs with these students. The consultants and this researcher believe students and parents will be supportive of integration initiatives if there is help for the students in the regular classroom.

There is a need for the support of the Supervisor of Special Services' position for the consultants and staff; however, with time and experience, that role could possibly be assumed by the school-based consultants. There is concern about the difficulty of retaining qualified, experienced special education teachers in rural Alberta. This expertise in the form of a special education consultant's position tends to be very person-specific and the "right" kind of person is needed to be in this position of leadership, whether at central office or in the schools, if the integration process is to continue to be successful. It is, also, suggested there is a necessity to continue to have liaison meetings where all the school-based consultants meet to share and discuss relevant issues. This kind of moral support for the consultants is necessary and important.

Another key issue that the school-based consultants identify is the need for increased time for the school-based consultants so that they can better meet the commitments and demands of the position. It is suggested more time be allocated for meeting with teachers and teacher assistants, training staff, case conferencing, and tracking students. This is critical to the program's success.

From the Teachers

The teachers identify "attitude" of regular classroom teachers as one key issue in determining whether or not the needs of students with learning disabilities will be met. Special education personnel can be very supportive by providing the time for consultation and sharing their expertise with regular classroom teachers. There is a need for assistance in developing the more complex individual education plans and programs, but it is felt teachers can now handle developing their own modified individual education plans. Testing and follow-up case conferencing with staff, students and parents is seen as a critical support for teachers. There is a need for the expertise and support in special education from an "expert". Increasing school-based consulting time, particularly if there is no longer a special education position in central office, is a possibility. A need for more general teacher assistants is very important. However, interestingly enough, both teachers state that, although all these supports from special education personnel are important, the main reason they are important is because they help teachers acquire the right "attitude" towards these students. A key issue will always be whether the individual teacher in his/her classroom works hard to acquire and maintain a positive attitude towards all students no matter what their challenges or gifts, and whether or not that teacher is willing to do whatever it takes to help all children in his/her class achieve success.

Professional development has much to do with bringing about good attitudes and nurturing the belief systems to support the vision. Research shows that, more than any other method, professional development is the most effective preparation for integration (Freeze et al, 1989; Thousand & Villa, 1989; Alberta Education Response Centre, 1992). In the Yellowhead Integrated Services Review (1992), areas of recommended in-service include: effective use of

paraprofessionals, early identification of at-risk students, interpreting assessments with a mind to developing instructional plans, classroom management, teaching pro-social skills, use of peer tutors and buddy systems, team work/collaboration, cooperative learning, and computer training. Thousand and Villa (1989) state that professional development endeavors provide a basis for a common conceptual framework, promoting common language and understanding. Campbell (1987) suggests the "advantage of on-going training is that everyone begins to believe and say the same thing" (cited in Alberta Education Response Centre, 1992, p. 30). The teachers' perception is that master teachers can teach all students if given adequate training and support.

From the Teacher Assistants

Teacher assistants identify the need for students with learning disabilities to have qualified personnel to turn to for help, whether that person be the regular classroom teacher, a teacher assistant, a special education teacher, or a counsellor. Special education personnel can and do provide support for the regular classroom teacher by being readily available for specific purposes deemed necessary by the teacher. Teacher assistants can provide support by working one-on-one or facilitating small group instruction. They can provide assistance in the classroom by enabling the necessary program modifications under the direction of the teacher. They can provide emotional support should the need arise as well as the teaching of social skills. School-based consultants can provide testing and case conferencing leadership. They can provide the emotional support necessary for teachers as well as the professional expertise in programming and in-service. The Supervisor of Special Services' position is seen as important in terms of leadership in the district, particularly if the school-based

consultant does not have the necessary expertise and experience to help staff.

From the Parents

This researcher concurs with parents' indication that a key issue in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities is whether or not an overall attitude prevails in the school district that everything possible must be done to assist teachers in meeting the needs of these students. It is recommended that the board and superintendent have to support staff in initiatives in this area, both monetarily and philosophically. Although total integration is not necessarily seen as the only means of meeting these students' needs, it is most often seen as the most effective means. The introduction of a Supervisor of Special Services and school-based consultants is the single most important factor in facilitating this "attitude" among all stakeholders. These leaders provide a vision that is "non-negotiable" (Holmes, 1993, p. 36). It is seen as important that "[l]eaders need to ensure that noone can be in any doubt about what the school stands for and is aiming towards" (Holmes, 1993, p. 34). Increased funding to provide more time for these positions is advocated. Sergiovanni (1992) supports this view that leaders have important roles because "leadership [is not] just coming up with a slogan that you could call your "vision"; . . . leaders [bring with them] a set of conceptions that become the idea structure for their schools" (p. 47).

With the increase in behavior disorders and emotional difficulties among learning disabled students, counsellors are necessary in both schools. The use of general teacher assistants in classrooms to modify programs, to work on-on-one or in small group situations, and to provide emotional support for these students is critical. The parents suggest that more general teacher assistants be hired to assist teachers and make their jobs more manageable, thereby

creating more classrooms that are conducive to being able to meet the needs of all students.

From Community Members

North Peace Catholic School District #43 is perceived in the community of Peace River as being progressive, caring, and successful with students with learning disabilities. These community members feel this is due to the emphasis put on special education, including the hiring of a Supervisor of Special Services and school-based consultants. They support the belief that applying pressure balanced with support would lead to increased chance of success (McLaughlin, 1990). Teachers in the system are seen as being more informed about learning disabilities and open to new ideas. The key concern for community members is the provision of personnel in special education leadership positions to provide expertise, knowledge, and leadership in the effort to move towards a vision of integration. Mitchell and Tucker (1992) agree that leaders should "see themselves as responsible more for redefining educational goals than for implementing existing programs" (p.33) and refer to them as transformational leaders. Leithwood (1992) says these leaders have optimism, energy, and commitment. They redefine mission and vision and are good at restructuring the system. Transformational leaders have three goals: 1) to help staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture by providing time for planning and goal setting, by sharing vision, and by delegating power; 2) to foster teacher development by encouraging personal growth; and 3) to help them solve problems together more effectively or "work smarter" (Leithwood, 1992; Mitchell and Tucker, 1992). These leaders help the schools earn good reputations in the area of learning disabilities in the community, thereby developing confidence in agency people and parents in the staffs' abilities to meet the needs of these students. It is

suggested that there is a need to reinstitute the position of Supervisor of Special Services, to increase school-based consultants' time, to hire more general teacher assistants, and generally provide more funding to support initiatives in professional development for all staff, particularly regular classroom teachers.

Special Education Personnel and Their Roles

In order for regular classroom teachers to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, the special education personnel in the district must support the teachers in numerous ways. Each have specific responsibilities that enable the process and someone or some persons must take on the leadership roles in the process. That person or persons must be seen by others as the "expert(s)". The following are the positions interviewees identified as being the core of the special education team and the expectations of their roles.

Supervisor of Special Services

- displays leadership qualities in the area of special education;
- is the expert on learning disabilities;
- educates and provides knowledge on learning disabilities to all stakeholders;
- informs district leaders on the special education scenario;
- does assessments and facilitates follow-up case conferences for staff, parents, and students;
- consults with teachers and teacher assistants on programming suggestions and resources;
- assists staff on the development of individual education plans;
- in-services staff and parents in areas relevant to learning disabilities;

- acts as community liaison person with relevant agencies; and
- assists principals in providing accountability in services for special education and learning disabilities.

School-Based Consultant

- provides leadership within the school in the area of special education;
- works closely with the Supervisor of Special Services to enhance expertise and knowledge in the area of learning disabilities;
- educates staff, parents, and students on learning disabilities;
- does assessments and facilitates follow-up case conferences on all assessments;
- consults with staff on programming considerations and suggestions;
- assists staff with the development of individual education plans;
- works with the Supervisor of Special Services to in-service staff;
- acts as a liaison with the Supervisor of Special Services and other community people; and
- assists principals in providing accountability in the area of special education and learning disabilities

Teacher Assistant

- works under the direction of a classroom teacher;
- modifies programs for students with learning disabilities according to teachers' expectations and/or modification suggestions;
- works one-on-one or in small groups with students on assigned tasks or specific skill remediation;

- works closely with the Supervisor of Special Services and school-based consultant on program modifications and delivery; and
- assists students in daily tasks of organization, output, and study skills.

It is evident that, in addition to the three roles listed above, the principal is a key supportive player to the team in promoting belief systems and supporting all personnel in their endeavors to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. Principal leadership is crucial for implementation success (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976; Leithwood, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1991; Fullan, 1991; Leithwood, 1992; Holmes, 1993).

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for North Peace Catholic School District #43:

1. Continue to work towards the long-term goal of integration of students with learning disabilities but with an eye to address the issue of specific skill remediation.
2. Maintain the position of Supervisor of Special Services at central office until such time as the integration process is fine-tuned in all schools and school-level personnel have acquired the same level of expertise and training necessary to be viewed as "experts" in the area of learning disabilities.
3. Develop the school-level expertise of the school-based consultants so that they are able to assist teachers in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities and are able to promote the development and enhancement of the integration process.
4. Support the integration process by providing sufficient personnel, including special education staffing, counsellors, and regular classroom teachers, so the chance of success is greatly increased.

5. Increase the allocation for professional development for all staff, in the schools and at central office, and for board members so that district personnel receive sufficient training and knowledge in the area of learning disabilities.
6. Train regular classroom teachers by giving them the skills to think metacognitively about their practice.
7. Train regular classroom teachers in programs and strategies that can be used with all students that promote increased metacognitive, independent, and successful learning.
8. Develop policy to support the integration initiative.

Implications

The numerous recommendations that have emerged from the study have serious implications for the school district decision-makers. It is evident that most of those implications center around the need to provide adequate funding to support this locally-approved initiative, allowing the expertise to be developed within the system. Funding would support an increase to the number of personnel, an increase in time for consultation, and access to more professional development.

Suggestions for Further Research

As the study progressed, several ideas for further research emerged:

1. A questionnaire could be distributed to all district staff in the schools asking:
    a. for their perceptions on how the present system is or is not meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities;
    b. for their suggestions and input for special education program considerations; and
    c. their level of satisfaction with the current system.

2. A questionnaire could be distributed to parents of students with identified learning disabilities in the district asking:

   a. for their perceptions on how the present system is or is not meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities;

   b. for their suggestions and input for special education program considerations; and

   c. their level of satisfaction with the current system.

3. A detailed cost analysis of the past special education program and the present one could be conducted to compare cost efficiency.

4. A comparison to Yellowhead School Division and its integration initiatives would provide useful suggestions and ideas.

Conclusion

Findings from the study indicate that special education personnel are having some good results assisting regular classroom teachers with meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities because of the work that was put into the development of, what was often referred to by interviewees as, the right "attitude". However, many stakeholders experience some serious frustration over the lack of funding to truly support integration efforts. Perceptions indicate that, philosophically, the system is more progressive and more on target than most school systems in the province, but due to recent financial constraints the board is no longer supporting the program to the degree that is warranted. Staff is expected to meet the needs of all special education students without adequate personnel or support systems in place for the regular classroom teachers.

In addition to providing supports for staff, it is necessary to address how teachers can specifically develop productive, effective, and positive learning abilities in

students with learning disabilities. Cognition is defined as the "process of knowing", whereas metacognition is described as the "awareness of oneself as an active agent in the process of learning" (Mulcahy et al., 1987, p. 12). To put this in a historical perspective, it is evident that programs in the past have only slightly, if ever, foraged into this metacognitive area. It may be that traditional resource room or remedial programs do good jobs of teaching specific skills or strategies (cognitive skills). They may provide arenas for building confidence of the learners in isolated settings, but there has been little evidence, if any, that transfer is taking place to the regular classroom or that students recognize that they are responsible for this process. As well, it appears that only a few pull-out programs offer training in metacognitive skills. Because of these reasons, it is apparent that present programs are often diametric in philosophy to the metacognitive theories of learning. If metacognition is seen as a goal of instruction, then our schools will have to re-evaluate program delivery for students with learning disabilities.

Metacognitive strategy development in children with learning disabilities has implications for education practices in the future. Both metacognition and motivation appear to be important in terms of this population's ability to generalize and maintain strategies once they learn them. The future will likely see further research in 'how' strategies can be taught and 'where' they should be taught. The movement appears to advocate for a removal of most cognitive and metacognitive instruction from isolated settings to regular classroom settings. This means that regular classroom teachers will need to be taught how to teach these students these strategies.

Despite cutbacks and their negative impact, North Peace Catholic is still perceived to be more effective with its methods of meeting the needs of learning disabled students than other systems who use only historical, traditional

models of service delivery. Both the literature and the results from this study indicate integration is a favorable goal for students with learning disabilities but recommend there is still a need for specific remediation of some skills. Some of this remediation may have to be done on a segregated basis. Many of the interviewees call for creative solutions to the dilemma of integration versus segregation. Perhaps the answer lies in new non-traditional, creative methods. The concept of after school hours resource rooms or tutoring programs provided as a free service by the school system, just as Resource Room programming is during school hours, has not been investigated to this researchers' knowledge. This idea could possibly lead to the removal of stigma attached to pull-out programs in schools while, at the same time, providing all parents/families with equal access to remedial assistance. It would allow access to quality instruction by trained special education personnel.

In the final analysis, the stakeholders in #43 have demonstrated that through effective leadership at many levels and a commitment to the vision, meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities is happening in the regular classrooms. Continued movement and growth in this area is likely to occur if the district continues to allocate time, energy, personnel, and funding in the pursuit of the vision.

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Appendix A

Covering Letter for Consent Form

Dana Laliberte
116 RH Michener Park
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 4M4
May_____, 1992

Dear _____:

I want to thank-you once again for agreeing to participate in my thesis study on how schools can create enabling regular classroom environments for learning disabled students in North Peace Catholic Schools in Peace River. This research study is in partial fulfillment of my degree in the Master of Educational Administration program at the University of Alberta, but it is, also, my hope that the study will provide some useful information for the school system.

The purpose and nature of the research study I am undertaking is to examine the Special Education program that was initiated in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in 1988, from its inception to the present. The focus will be limited to seeking information about one segment of the special needs population, the learning disabled student. The intention is to identify how these students' needs have been and can be met within the school system, particularly in the regular classroom.

Your input is appreciated and will be of great value to the successful completion of the study. Participation is, of course, voluntary. I would like to assure you that, although you have made an initial commitment to this research, you are free at any time to withdraw from the study. I, also, want to emphasize that any information you provide will remain confidential.

.../2

Once the interview has been transcribed, you will be given an opportunity to read the transcription and add, delete or modify any of your responses. Following the analysis of the data and upon completion of all the research, I will provide you with a copy of the themes that emerge and a summary of my research findings.

I will be making further contact with you in the near future regarding dates and times for the initial and subsequent interviews. I would ask that you please read and sign the attached ***letter of consent form*** and return it to me at this address:

Dana Laliberte
116 RH Michener Park
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 4M4

I sincerely appreciate your voluntary participation in this study and I look forward to meeting with you. If you require any further clarification, please phone me collect at 434-8989.

Sincerely,

Dana Laliberte

Appendix B

Consent Form

Letter of Consent

Re: Study: Meeting the Needs of Learning Disabled Students in the Regular Classroom

I, the undersigned, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any point and that all the information I give will be kept confidential. It is, also, my understanding that I will be given the opportunity to read transcripts of the interviews in which I participate so that I may add, delete or modify any responses to my satisfaction.

Authorized Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Superintendent Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Superintendent Interview Questions

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Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

****

Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. In September 1988, a new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43. This service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The primary focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What are you recollections and impressions of this model to date?

What comments, positive and negative, have been made to you regarding this program over the last four years?

What changes have been made to the original plan, that you are aware of? Why were they made?

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?

What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the positives and negatives.]

2. Students with learning disabilities are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In the District, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do various stakeholders have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs of learning disabled students?

Are you aware of any special or new initiatives that have been launched in an attempt to meet the needs of the learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

3. What do you think effective teachers try to do to enable learning disabled students to experience success in the classroom?

What kind of thought goes into that planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

4. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for learning disabled children in the District?

Who ensures that District and school-level expectations, with respect to learning disabled students, are carried out?

5. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to the present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns?

Appendix D

Principal Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Principal Interview Questions

****

Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

****

Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. At the time the new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in September 1988, what were your responsibilities in the District?

What are your early recollections about the initiation,

implementation and purpose of this new system of Special Education service delivery?
What were reactions to this move in Peace River?

2. Over the next four years, did any changes occur with respect to how Special Education was happening in the District? Can you describe some of those changes and reactions to them?

Explain the effects of these changes on:
children with learning disabilities;
staff; and
significant other stakeholders.

3. Students with learning disabled are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In your school, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do various stakeholders have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs of learning disabled students?

In your school, have any special or new initiatives been launched to attempt to meet the needs of learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

4. What do effective teachers do to try to enable learning disabled students to experiences success in the classroom?

What kind of thought goes into the planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

5. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for learning disabled children in your school?

Who ensures that District and school-level expectations, with respect to learning disabled students, are carried out?

6. The present service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?

What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the positives and negatives.]

7. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to the present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns?

Appendix E

School-Based Consultant Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

School-Based Consultant Interview Questions

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Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

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Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. At the time the new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in September 1988, what were your responsibilities in the District?

What are your early recollections about the initiation,

implementation and purpose of this new system of special Education service delivery?

What were reactions to this move in Peace River?

2. Over the next four years, did any changes occur with respect to how Special Education was happening in the District? Can you describe some of those changes and reactions to them?

Explain the effects of these changes on:
children with learning disabilities;
staff; and
significant other stakeholders.

3. Students with learning disabled are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In your school, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do various stakeholders have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs of learning disabled students?

In your school, have any special or new initiatives been launched to attempt to meet the needs of learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

4. In your school./classroom, how do you try to enable learning disabled students to experience success?

What kind of thought goes into the planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

5. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for learning disabled children in your school?

6. The present service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?

What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the successes and failures/disappointments.]

7. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to the present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns.

Appendix F

Teacher Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Teacher Interview Questions

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Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

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Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. At the time the new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in September 1988, what were your responsibilities in the District?

What are your early recollections about the initiation,

implementation and purpose of this new system of special Education service delivery?

What were reactions to this move in Peace River?

2. Over the next four years, did any changes occur with respect to how Special Education was happening in the District? Can you describe some of those changes and reactions to them?

Explain the effects of these changes on:
children with learning disabilities;
staff; and
significant other stakeholders.

3. Students with learning disabled are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In your school, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do various stakeholders have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs of learning disabled students?

In your school, have any special or new initiatives been launched to attempt to meet the needs of learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

4. In your school./classroom, how do you try to enable learning disabled students to experience success?

What kind of thought goes into the planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

5. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for learning disabled children in your school?

6. The present service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?

What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the successes and failures/disappointments.]

7. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to the present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns.

Appendix G

Teacher Assistant Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Teacher Assistant Interview Questions

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Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

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Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. At the time the new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in September 1988, what were your responsibilities in the District?

What are your early recollections about the initiation, implementation and purpose of this new system of Special education service delivery?

What were reactions to this move in Peace River?

2. Over the next four years, did any changes occur with respect to how Special Education was happening in the District? Can you describe some of those changes and reactions to them?

Explain the effects of these changes on:
children with learning disabilities;
staff; and
significant other stakeholders.

3. Students with learning disabled are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In your school, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do various stakeholders have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs of learning disabled students?

In your school, have any special or new initiatives been launched to attempt to meet the needs of learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

4. What do you think effective teachers do to try to enable learning disabled students to experiences success in the classroom?

What kind of thought goes into the planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

5. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for learning disabled children in your school?

Who ensures that District and school-level expectations, with respect to learning disabled students, are carried out?

6. The present service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?
What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the positives and negatives.]

7. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to the present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns?

Appendix H

Parent Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Parent Interview Questions

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Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

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Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. Before the new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in September 1988, what kind of special assistance was your child receiving in the school?

What are your early recollections about the initiation, implementation and purpose of this new system of special Education service delivery?

What were reactions to this move in Peace River?

2. Over the next four years, did any changes occur with respect to how Special Education was happening in the District? Can you describe some of those changes and reactions to them?

Explain the effects of these changes on:
children with learning disabilities;
staff; and
significant other stakeholders.

3. Students with learning disabled are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In your child's school, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do you and your child have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs for your child?

In your child's school, have any special or new initiatives been launched to attempt to meet the needs of learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

4. What do you think effective teachers do to try to enable your child to experiences success in the classroom?

What kind of thought do these teacher put into the planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

5. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for your child and other learning disabled children in the school?

Who ensures that District and school-level expectations, as well as your expectations, with respect to your child, are carried out?

6. The present service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?

What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the positives and negatives.]

7. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to the present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns?

Supplementary Question

As far as education goes, what do you want for your child each day he/she goes to school? What do you want from the school?

Appendix I

Community Member Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Community Member Interview Questions

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Preamble: Introduction and Ethical Considerations

Explain to the interviewee:

a) the significance of his/her contributions to the study;

b) the nature and purpose of the study;

c) that information will be kept confidential;

d) that his/her permission is needed to use note-taking and to tape record the interview;

e) that the interview can be stopped at any time;

f) that he/she will be given the opportunity to read transcriptions so that he/she may add, delete or modify any of his/her responses; and

g) that, upon completion of the study, he/she will be provided with a summary of the findings and themes that emerge.

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Framework for Interview Questions

Primary Question

What can be done to facilitate the process of teachers meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in a small rural school system?

1. Before the new Special Education system (hiring of Supervisor of Special Services, elimination of traditional Resource Rooms, replacement of Special Education teachers with general teaching assistants) was introduced in North Peace Catholic School District #43 in September 1988, what kind of special assistance do you think children with learning disabilities were receiving in Peace River Catholic schools?

What do you think were the purposes of creating such a unique Special Education system of delivery?

How do you feel about this move with respect to the effects on learning disabled students in the Catholic system?

What do you think others (staff, parents, community members, students, etc) reactions have been to this model of delivery?

2. Students with learning disabled are defined as "those students who have been identified by administrators, teachers and/or parents as having average/above average intelligence but are underachieving and displaying general and/or specific deficiencies in several areas".

In District schools, what attempts have been made to meet the needs of learning disabled students, particularly in the regular classroom?

What input do parents, significant stakeholders and learning disabled children themselves have with regards to decision-making in the area of placements/programs?

Have you heard of any special or new initiatives that have been launched to attempt to meet the needs of learning disabled students in the regular classroom?

3. What do you think effective teachers do to try to enable learning disabled children to experiences success in the classroom?

What kind of thought do these teacher put into the planning process?

What do you feel are the beliefs and attitudes of effective teachers toward learning disabled students?

4. Who, in your mind, is responsible to see that the Special Education services are provided for learning disabled children in the school?

5. The present service delivery model differs from many others in the province. The focus is to integrate learning disabled students in the regular classroom.

What do you see as the benefits of such a Special Education model?

What do you see as the most crucial issues or concerns related to integrating learning diabled students in the regular classroom?

[Seek stories which illustrate the positives and negatives.]

6. What changes and/or improvements need to be made to this present model of service delivery to students with learning disabilities, particularly in the regular classroom?

What is now being done to address these concerns in North Peace Catholic schools?

Supplementary Question

As far as education goes, what do you see as necessary and important for learning disabled students to succeed? What do you want from schools?